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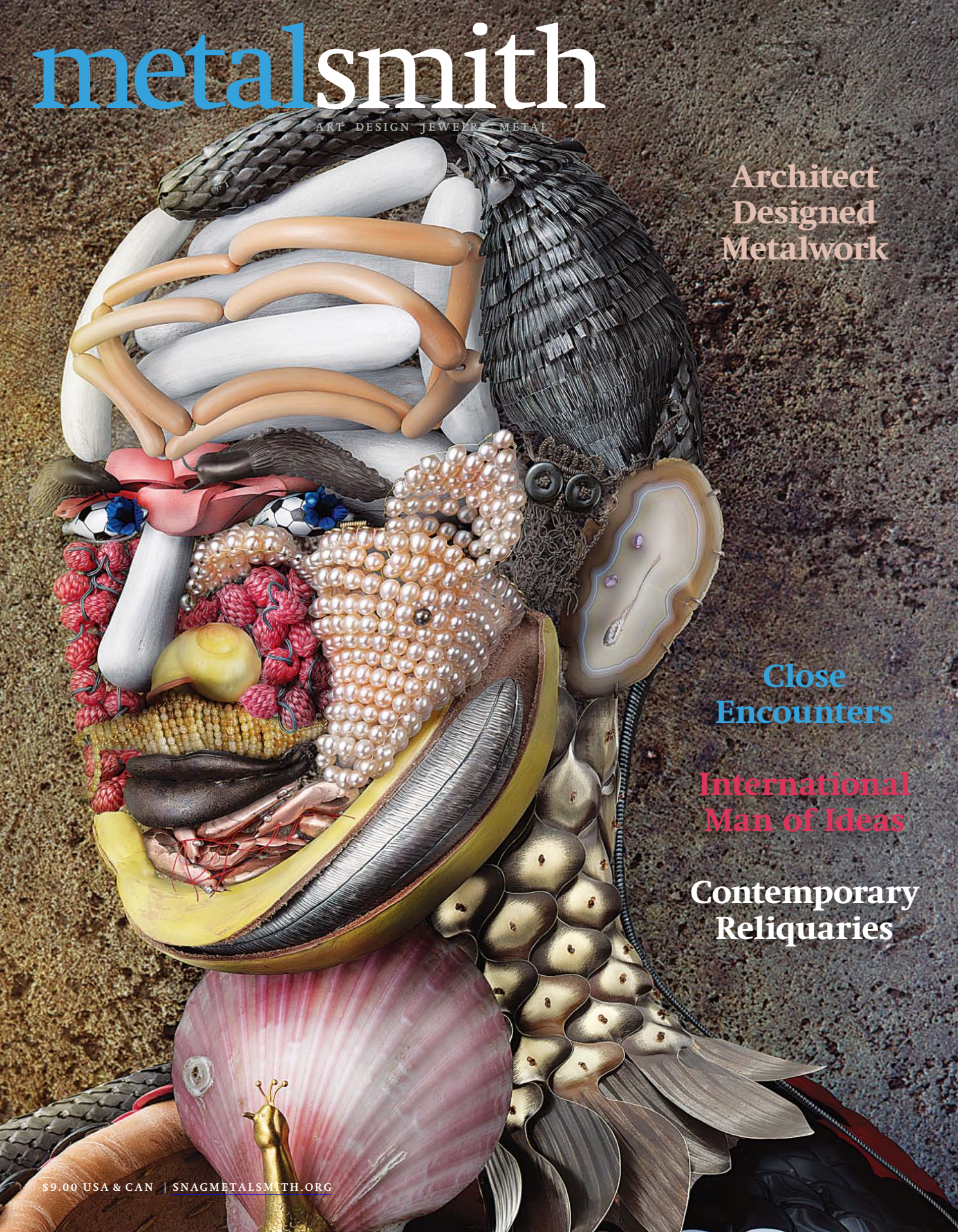

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Rocaille (neckpiece), 2013
antlers, resin, bone, antique frame fragments, gold leaf
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FOREWORD

IN THE BROADEST sense, a relic is anything that has survived from the past. Within a religious context, it is an object deemed holy and highly revered. We are surrounded by both types of relics: those that have simply accumulated in our lives, along with those that have been intentionally saved and cherished.

This issue of *Metalsmith* is strewn with beautiful remainders and relics, all preserved through the creative act. As discussed in the article, "Remains of the Day: Contemporary Reliquaries" it is the reliquary container that transports the relic to a higher plane of importance, lest it languish amidst the debris. The varied relationships between relic and reliquary serve to lend further value and meaning to the chosen object, whether it be a wisdom tooth, insect repellent or a dinosaur bone.

Though not reliquaries per se, many of Jennifer Trask's works, featured here, transfigure found items in a similar way. A collector of animal bones, teeth and antlers, Trask reconstitutes them in lush, aestheticized settings through which we can behold, and even venerate, these organic vestiges. Trask's transformative work "elevates the cycle of existence, ameliorating decay and death," according to writer Toni Greenbaum.

It is not a stretch to suggest that all found object art is tied to the reliquary genre, given that it contains, preserves and illuminates the repurposed item. Cover artist David Bielander's early jewelry deftly enacts such reclamation and juxtaposition. Bielander's facility and delight with this approach is exemplified in his surprising bottle cap mouth brooches and his "Dummy Head" pins made of pacifier nipples and pearls.

In the end, our experience of engaging art is akin to that of a relic and its reliquary. They both stage an encounter that seeks to inspire our wonder, if not awe, in the face of life's glorious leftovers.

SUZANNE RAMLJAK
EDITOR

The mission of *Metalsmith* magazine is to document, analyze, and promote excellence in jewelry and metalsmithing. In fulfillment of the goal of producing a significant document of the field, editorial content will emphasize contemporary activities and ideas, with supportive content to include relevant historical work and critical issues.

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JENNIFER TRASK

Detail of Volute Neckpiece & Landscape. 2013. Antlers, 17th & 18th century frame fragments, gesso, gold leaf, cast resin, bone, painted wood

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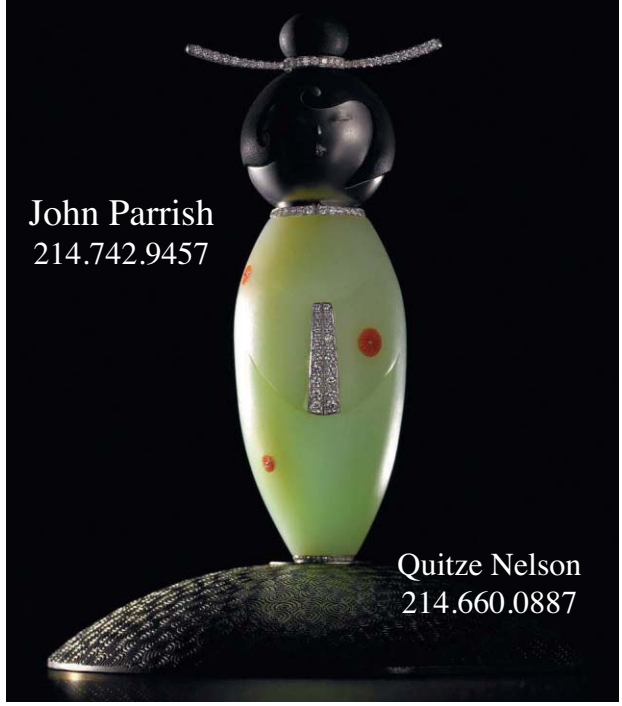

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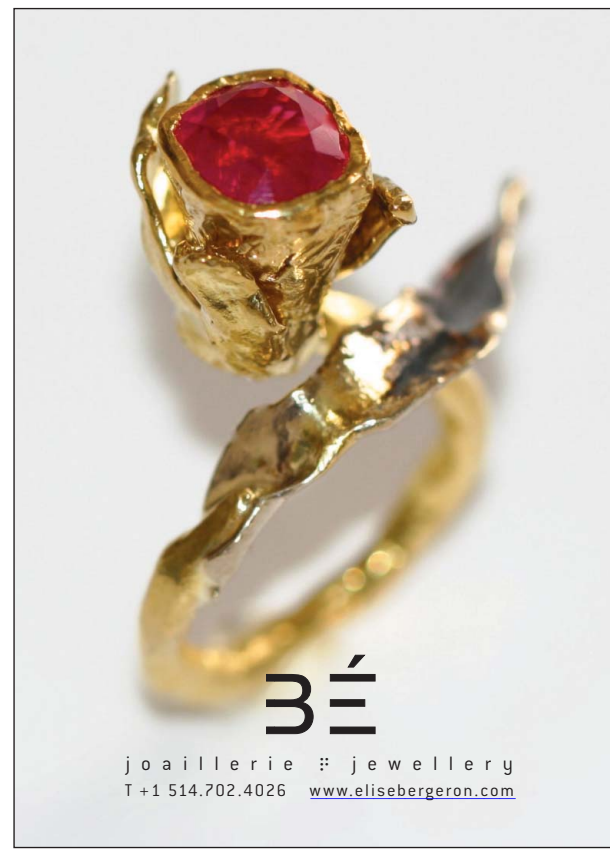

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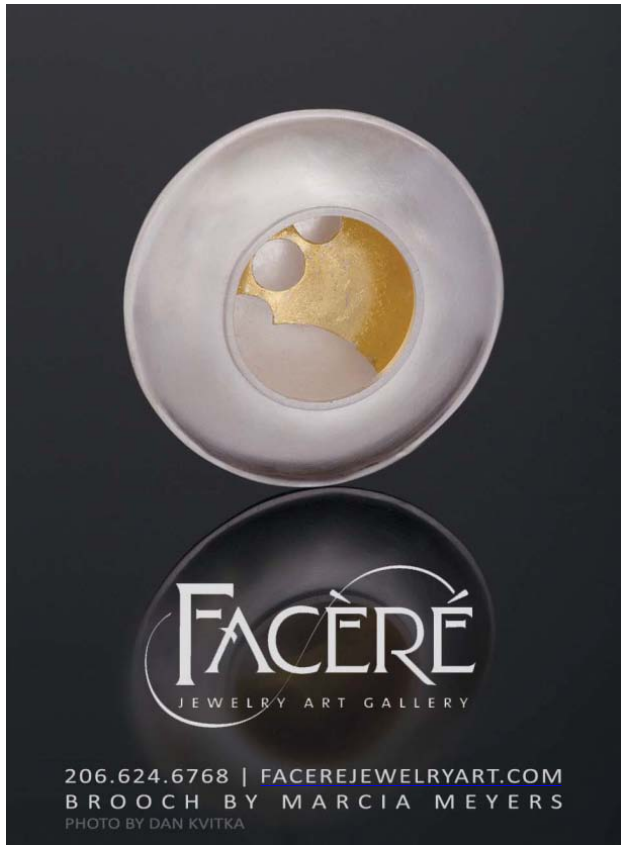

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Jewellery in Israel: Multicultural Diversity 1948 to the Present

EDITED BY IRIS FISHOF
ARNOLDSCHE ART PUBLISHERS, 2013
BY DAVIRA S. TARAGIN

OVER THE PAST decade, Americans have progressively been exposed to the latest developments in contemporary Israeli jewelry. This attention can be credited in part to the efforts of the Association of Israel's Decorative Arts (AIDA), founded in 2003. In addition to organizing trips to acquaint American curators and collectors with Israeli jewelry, AIDA has sponsored Israeli participation in numerous US museum, craft and gallery exhibitions. The publication *Jewellery in Israel: Multicultural Diversity 1948 to the Present,* by noted Israeli art historian and curator Iris Fishof, therefore, comes at a propitious moment, offering for the first time a context in which to evaluate and appreciate what we are seeing.

This beautifully designed book examines the evolution of the Israeli jewelry aesthetic through easy-to-read text and archival photographs of early settlers and makers—shown at times with their hand-wrought creations—together with stunning color photographs of contemporary pieces. While somewhat lacking in stylistic analysis of individual makers, *Jewellery in Israel* is most valuable as an in-depth historical account of the considerable role played by immigrants to Israel from Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia in fashioning a unique contemporary aesthetic. A secondary theme is the gradual acceptance of Israeli art jewelry within mainstream international developments.

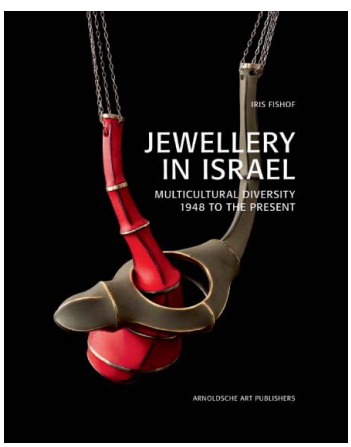
Sidebars within the five main chapters focus on outstanding makers and collectors and their contributions to Israeli culture. In the book's first three essays Fishof provides a much-needed framework for understanding Israel's contemporary jewelry scene. She posits that the centuries-old olive-wood and mother-of-pearl objects made for pilgrims, fabricated first by Muslims and then by Jews, were the Holy Land's initial souvenir jewelry offerings. They were supplemented shortly thereafter by glass bead ornaments and silver amulets produced by Jewish silversmiths from Yemen and Islamic countries, such as Kurdistan, Uzbekistan, Morocco and Georgia. In the beginning of the 20th century the jewelry market was augmented by what Fishof calls "a new local Hebrew style": jewelry produced in the newly formed silver-filigree department of Bezalel, the Zionist-inspired fine art and crafts school founded in Jerusalem in 1906 by Boris Schatz. With its union of art nouveau, Yemeni filigree, Oriental and indigenous motifs, this jewelry established a distinctive vernacular that was replaced only in the 1930s by the German artisans among the hordes fleeing Nazi Germany.

Fishof maintains that the immigrant contribution continued into the early 1950s, immediately following Israel's independence in 1948. But, she explains, from the 1950s through the 1970s, the state sought to unify its diverse immigrant cultures by discouraging the wearing of traditional ethnic costumes, including jewelry. As a result, much exquisite ethnic jewelry ended up either in flea markets or in private collections, many of which ultimately entered museums. However, shops run by immigrant silversmiths working in traditional folk styles continued to spring up.

Of crucial importance in the development of Israel's contemporary jewelry aesthetic—contributions often forgotten—are the roles played by Maskit, a state-owned company, and Bezalel. As Fishof explains, Makit, founded in 1954 by Ruth Dayan, initially provided much-needed employment in Israel's struggling young economy to the highly skilled immigrant silversmiths from such Islamic countries as Yemen and Morocco, commissioning traditional designs that were then modernized for wearability. In the 1970s, the company expanded its artist base to include academically trained independent jewelers.

Fishof essentially credits Bezalel for the shift in Israel's jewelry scene in the 1960s, from one of isolation to international recognition. Her fourth essay explores the impact of faculty—including Arje Griegst, Menachem Berman, Arie Ofir, Amitai Kav, Maury Golan and Alex Ward—as well as gifted students, whose works were achieving some recognition abroad, on jewelry design. By instituting programs

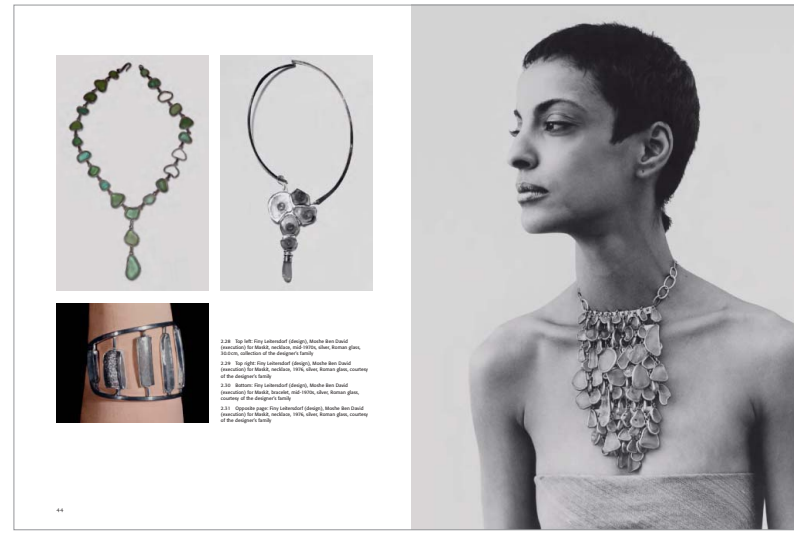
Fishof has provided us with a useful and timely cultural interpretation of the field.



such as annual design competitions, which provided an incentive for the creation of new work, Berman, who headed Bezalel's metalwork department for almost ten years at mid-century, was able to increase exports, thus invigorating the Israel Export Institute, and spurring further collaboration between Israeli jewelry designers and industry. This boost came at a time when Israel was facing relative isolation from the world community. The Danish-born Griegst, who traveled in the 1960s between Copenhagen and Jerusalem before heading the department from 1968 until 1972, is credited with introducing a more expressive, organic, colorful aesthetic, encouraging Israeli jewelers to abandon the once–pervasive Bauhaus influence. Finally, under Ofir, and his successor Ward, a number of distinguished international leaders in art jewelry visited Bezalel. Among these were the Europeans Gijs Bakker, Emmy Van Leersum, and Daniel Kruger and Americans Helen W. Drutt English and Stanley Lechtzin. Exchange programs resulted, one of the most fruitful being with Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia. The artist who in Fishof's view exerted the most influence, however, was the German-born sculptor Claus Bury, an early proponent of the so-called "New Jewelry." His two installations in the Judean and Sinai deserts in the 1970s, which involved Bezalel students, are now legendary.

Ward's tenure was notable as well for drawing attention to Israel's leading women jewelers: Bianca Eshel Gershuni, Vered Kaminski, Esther Knobel and Deganit Stern Schocken. Ward not only employed them at Bezalel, but later, as curator of design at The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, was responsible for their being the focus of a major international traveling exhibition. Fishof's fifth chapter is devoted to the careers of these four women, who have brought international recognition to Israel. While she largely makes use of existing scholarship in discussions of these artists, Fishof does provide fresh insight into the work Kaminski produced after 2005–06, drawing attention to the element of surprise often found in her pieces as well as her interest in historical jewelry.

In the final chapter, Fishof demonstrates how Israel's contemporary jewelry aesthetic



2.28 Top left: Finy Leibersdorf (design), Moshe Ben David (execution) for Maskit, necklace, mid-1970s, silver, Roman glass, 30.5cm, collection of the designer's family

2.29 Top right: Finy Leibersdorf (design), Moshe Ben David (execution) for Maskit, necklace, 1976, silver, Roman glass, courtesy of the designer's family

2.30 Bottom: Finy Leibersdorf (design), Moshe Ben David (execution) for Maskit, bracelet, mid-1970s, silver, Roman glass, courtesy of the designer's family

2.31 Opposite page: Finy Leibersdorf (design), Moshe Ben David (execution) for Maskit, necklace, 1976, silver, Roman glass, courtesy of the designer's family

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is an amalgamation of its history, reflecting both the tensions within its society as well as its multiculturalism. She suggests that today's makers have a deep-seated love for the land, but unlike earlier generations, they are eager to preserve rather than bury their diverse cultural roots. Many artists now directly reference the Holocaust in their work, as well as present-day tensions between various ethnic and economic populations, and of course to the pressures of living in a war-torn country. While Fishof ascribes their frequent use of inexpensive industrial materials to the scarcity of available resources, from 1960s through the '80s, there are others who see it is as a result of Israeli jewelers' exposure to the ethic of humble materials espoused by the Eurocentric New Jewelry movement. Fishof also claims that Israeli jewelry is primarily monochromatic and reflects the landscape, except where paint and/or enamel is added to reference popular culture. Fishof's blurbs on select jewelers in the closing chapter are less carefully written, however, than this and other sections of the book.

Jewellery in Israel, augmented by an extensive bibliography, is a valuable tool with which to appraise this burgeoning field. While it makes those of us residing in the United States yearn to see more historical as well as contemporary Israeli work, Fishof has provided us with a useful and timely cultural interpretation of the field. A book that offers more critical art-historical analysis is the next step.

Davira S. Taragin is consultative curator of decorative arts at the David Owsley Museum of Art, Ball State University, in Muncie, IN.

Donna Veverka
A Passion for History

BY ANDREA DINOTO

GOTHIC ARCHES AND traceries, coffered ceilings, crenellations, blades, daggers, marble fragments, even entire edifices are all to be found in Donna Veverka's boldly designed architectural jewelry. Imbued with her passion for historical styles and structures, Ververka's rings, bracelets, pendants and earrings, though not replicas, appear as archeological touchstones to the ancient past. One massive ring evokes the Colosseum in Rome, another a Greek amphitheater; for a pendant, the famed Duomo of Florence is reduced to wearable dimensions; Gothic arches are inverted as a pair of stylish earrings.

Working in sterling silver, Veverka employs a combination of lost-wax casting methods, hand forging and hand fabrication to produce what she aptly describes as "personal architecture." With a BFA in metalsmithing from the University of the Arts Philadelphia College of Art and Design and a MFA in sculpture from Massachusetts College of Art and Design, Veverka is well equipped to render ancient forms in gleaming metal. As she states in her website: "Every piece is carefully finished with attention to hammer marks, burnished edges, and contrasts between matte surfaces, highly polished accents, and blackened silver to emphasize the sculptural qualities."

Veverka's keen interest in the forms and motifs of the ancient world was sparked by a trip she and her husband took to Italy in 1997. Since then, she has lived and traveled there extensively, absorbing the culture and researching historic sites, she says, "for forms that capture my imagination." She often travels with her wax carving tools, so as to quickly model antique forms on the spot. In 2005, Veverka launched her business part-time; her day job was teaching basic jewelry techniques at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design. But by 2009, she had abandoned teaching and began to travel full-time to retail shows and craft fairs, now numbering as many as ten to twelve a year. In 2013, the number reached 15 and included the prestigious Smithsonian Craft Show invitational in Washington, D.C.

Often referring to herself as a "one-woman atelier," Veverka emphasizes that she produces all of her work herself, with the help of one studio assistant two days a week. She runs, she says, "a small, lean machine," economizing whenever possible and incurring no loans or credit card debt. While she has representation for one-of-a-kind work in several galleries, including Taboo Studio, in San Diego, and Mobilia, in Cambridge, MA, Veverka sells almost exclusively at retail shows, where she in fact relishes interaction with prospective customers, men and women alike. "I engage each person," she says, "and I'm a really big storyteller."

Being open and approachable but not pushy, says Veverka, is her most effective sales technique; easy to believe given her effervescent personality. She's convinced that people who go to craft fairs are there to have fun, and that sellers are "there to entertain them." One important aspect of such entertainment is the design of her booth, for which Veverka has created a stunning center piece: a black ziggurat on which she displays her most massive and dramatic architectural rings. (One

Jeweler Donna Veverka (left) working with customers at the American Crafts Festival at Lincoln Center, New York City, 2014.

Veverka has seen her sales increase every year, owing, she believes to how effectively she has found and nurtured her niche market.

Double Angle (neckpiece),
from "Fragment" series, 2013
sterling silver,
carved marble
12 x 3 ½ x 1"

Men's Architectural Rings, 2010–14
sterling silver
1 x 1 x ½"

enthusiastic customer, she reports, is a man who owns eleven rings. Similarly, a woman customer bought three of Veverka's aqueduct rings to commemorate a trip to Pont Aven, France, where the ancient Roman conduits still stand.)

Veverka has seen her sales increase every year, owing, she believes to how effectively she has found and nurtured her niche market, which is largely unisex. The bold rings, understandably, attract male customers but even her popular "Warrior Princess" line, which employs rivets, strapping (a reference to ironwork repairs often found on ancient buildings) and metallic fiber cords, appeals to both sexes. Similarly, blade forms, including daggers and spires, function, she says, as "comfortably dangerous" pendants and charms, with unisex Goth appeal. Veverka's most recent series, "Fragment," represents a venture into lapidary work. The dominant design element in each unique piece is a barrel-shaped chunk of white marble, an inch more or less in length, that she carves to resemble a broken segment of a fluted classical column, the kind of fragment found strewn around Roman ruins. (Images from this series earned Veverka the Massachusetts Cultural Council Artist Fellowship in Crafts in 2013 as well as acceptance into the Smithsonian show.)

So far Veverka has resisted the allure of e-commerce, although she will sell directly to people who contact her through her website, where prices range from $140 to $500 and up; prices for one-of-a-kind pieces are on request. Of the people who manage to track her down via the Internet, Veverka says: "They're always surprised to get me on the phone."

Andrea DiNoto is a New-York based writer on art and design.

Furthermore:
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Object Lessons

BY THOMAS MANN

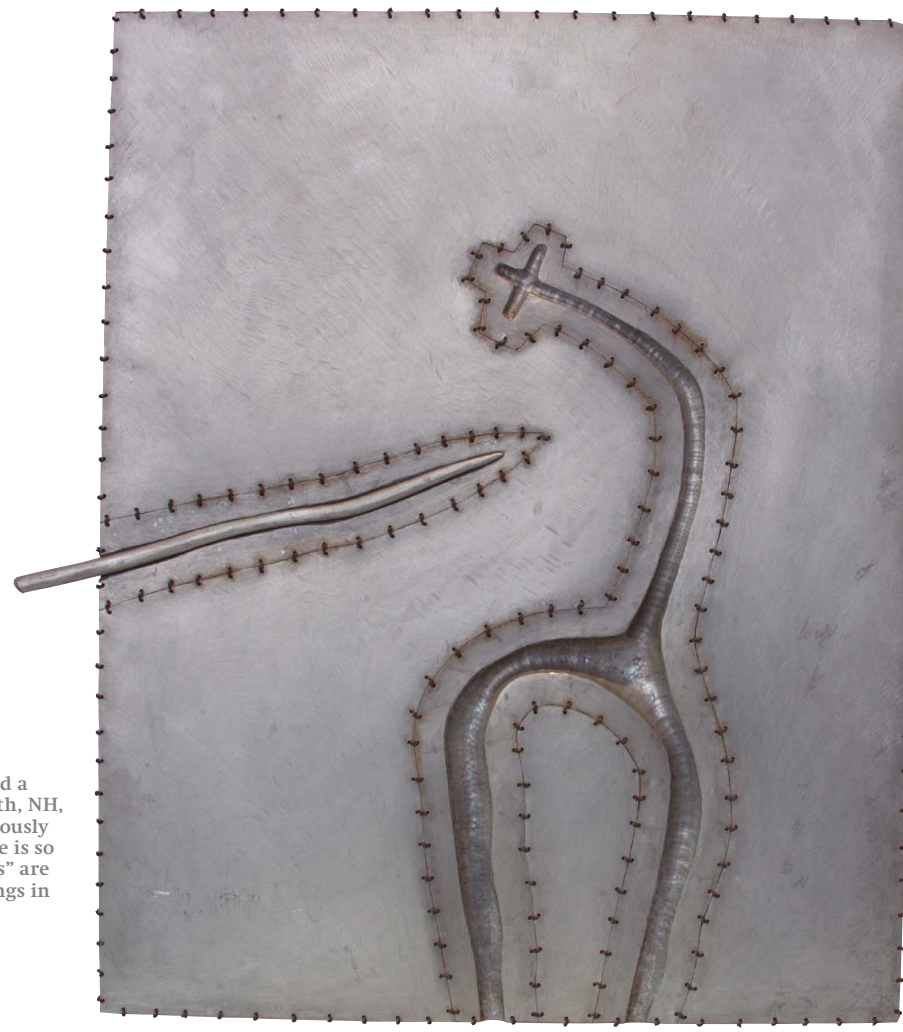
ONE OF THE few perks a self-employed artist may enjoy is the delightful opportunity to barter one's work for that of colleagues. I've been making trades of this sort with artist-friends for more than 40 years. As a result, I have acquired a multi-medium collection of objects that, in every case, connects me to those artists in a tangible manner. It's not unlike the connection that we make with our patrons. I have always believed that the objects we create and the money exchanged for them represent an unparalleled energy transfer between the artist and owner.

Six years ago I reluctantly had to pack up and store my collection of trades—many of which I used or looked at every day—while I renovated and moved into new digs at the Rose Tattoo, an old bar in New Orleans that I frequented in the 1970s, bought in the early 90s, and had been using as storage, studio and the occasional rental. Now I live and work here, along with my primary studio above Gallery I/O. I recently opened one of the 15 boxes that have been hiding in the attic and there found a treasure trove of trades and acquisitions from fellow metalsmiths. It was like visiting with old friends—both the individuals who made them and the things themselves. I was so taken by this particular collection that I was moved to share some of them in these pages.

Thomas Mann is enjoying his 44th year as a self-employed artist metalsmith who lives and works in New Orleans, LA.

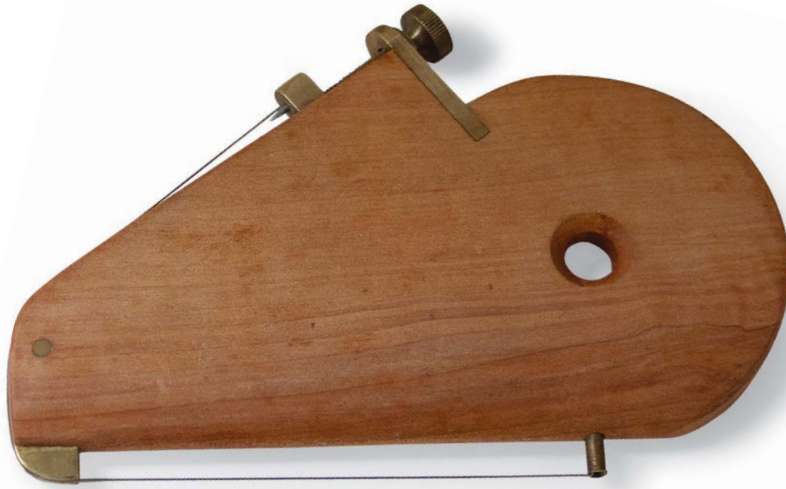
KIT CARSON
Dia de los Muertos Dude con Sombrero Pin
silver, gold, brass, turquoise
1 ¾ x 1 ¼"

This cat has had his finger on the Southwestern Cowboy /Mexican / Native American pulse for a long time, like goin' back all the way to his ancestor by the same name! The engraved detail, the multilayered mixed metals... umm umm! And in such small spaces.



TOM COWGILL
Wall Sculpture
aluminum, wood, steel
17 ½ x 14 x ¾"

Tom and I became friends when I occupied a studio in the Button Factory in Portsmouth, NH, where he also worked. He possesses a seriously personal aesthetic. The surface detail here is so tasty. It appears stitched, but the "stitches" are actually individual staples. This piece hangs in my studio and delivers constant delight.



BRAD SMITH
Cheese Slicer
wood, brass, steel
3 ½ x 5 ½ x ½"

I love this food tool! Brad combines his woodworking and metalsmithing skills with a piano design inspiration to make a cheese slicer that really works, is ergonomically strong, and is a delight to behold. I have two of them!

BRUCE MCDONALD
Martini Glass
stainless steel, blown glass
7 ½ x 4 ¾"

Bruce is a metal genius who has moved on from making functional objects to large stainless steel wall sculptures. His design and fabrication are precise, and the connection to the glass, made by a glassblower friend in Vermont, is inventive and unique.

MICKI LIPPI
Spirit House
silver, bronze
¾ x 2 x 2"

This piece has lived on my desk for many years now. I like to think that it grounds that particular workspace, which is just what I know that Micki was hoping it would do when she made it. Thanks Micki…it's working.

PHILIP BALDWIN
Chef Knife
steel, wood, silver
length 12"

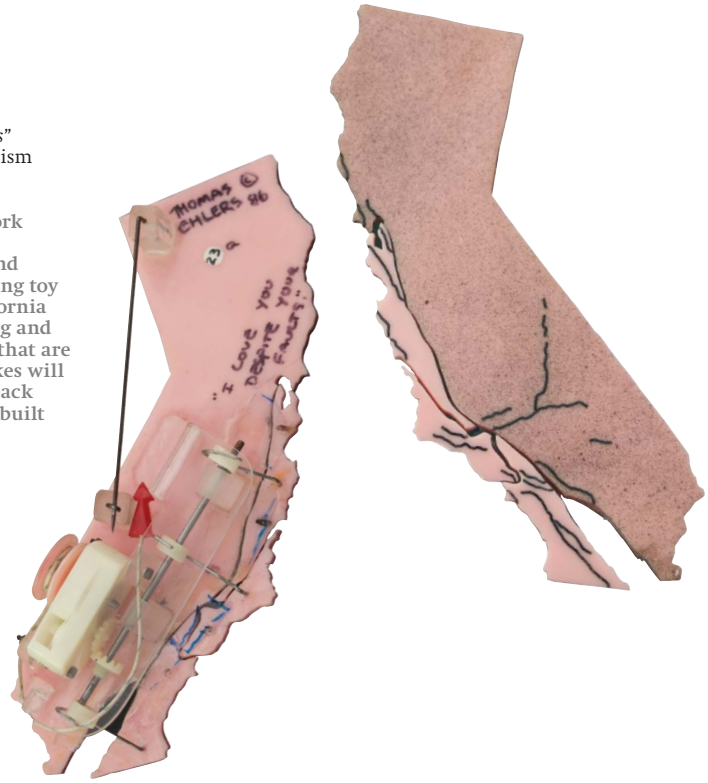
I acquired this knife at the Penland School auction when Phil and I were both teaching there. We had traded before, but this chef knife made from the hull plates of a WWII Liberty Ship really intrigued me. I use it every opportunity I can. It's so lovingly balanced and such a joy to employ that I feel bad letting it hang out useless on the rack.

MARSHA MCDONALD
Heart in a Box
silver, steel
1 x 2 ¾ x 2 ¾"

We miss you Marsh. I keep this in sight in the studio along with the holiday ornaments you gave me. Everything Marsha made had her in it. She loved making the work and we loved her for it. We shared a booth at the Philadelphia Craft Show a year before she passed and had a great time.

MARKS ALEXANDER
Constructivist Brooch
silver, bronze, brass
4 ¾ x ¾ x ¼"

I met Marks when he attended a Design for Survival™ class I was teaching in Atlanta. We became friends and I consulted with him as he attempted a career shift from architecture to jewelry artist. It's a hard row to hoe for anyone so he's become a very successful architect, has a great family. and still makes some jewelry on the side.



TOM EHLERS
"I love you despite your faults"
acrylic, paint, toy mechanism
5 ½ x 1"

This is a truly unique work that I bartered in 1986. Meticulously designed and fabricated, it's a pull string toy brooch of a map of California fault lines. Pull the string and the sections of the state that are threatened by earthquakes will flap up and down. This back view reveals the custom-built mechanism. So tasty!

SANDRA ENTERLINE
Ladder Brooch
silver
4 ¾ x ¾ x 1/4"

What is it about ladders? They are so enticing a metaphor, and then you get Sandy's take on it with this unbelievable hollow form construction that adds still another dimension to the idea. This early piece still amuses and intrigues me.

PIERRE CAVALAN
Assemblage Glasses
steel, glass, enamels, rhodium plating
2 ½ x 6"

I met Pierre many years ago at a SNAG conference, then visited him in Australia in 1997, and again in 2012. His early foray into the world of metalsmithing was based largely on his acquisition of the overstock of an enameled pin manufacturer that he soldered together, then re-plated to create an extremely personal and unique "look."

The Transformative Art of Jennifer Trask

BY TONI GREENBAUM

Burgeon, 2012
found 18th- and 19th-century
Italian gilt wood fragments, 23.5k
gold leaf, antler, bone, teeth
(various), epoxy resin
78 x 40 x 11"

Lunaria Necklace, 2005
18k and 22k gold, palladium, Lunaria annua (moon or money plant), moonstones, rosecut diamonds, shed python skin, dragonfly wings, mica, ficus leaf skeleton
13 x 14"

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, I was horseback riding in southern Utah when I happened upon a deer skull in my path. Surely not an unexpected sighting, given the terrain, it nonetheless proved memorable. This chance encounter turned my thoughts to painter Georgia O'Keeffe and her ecstatic vision of the American Southwest, often characterized by the same moribund presence. Paradoxically, naked bones do not suggest death so much as life lived in beauty and grace. Confronting the skeleton of a once-noble creature reminds us that though all existence must end, there is valor in the inevitable decay. Such remains serve to memorialize a once- sentient being who made its mark and left a trace; and that evocative image of an interrupted life continues to haunt me to this day.

Jennifer Trask is an artist who, like O'Keeffe, finds rapture in the myriad wonders of nature, comfort in the chronicle of being; but Trask modifies and conjoins a dense web of lush, organic fragments to fashion an alternative reality. From early childhood spent growing up on Cape Cod, in Massachusetts, Trask was fascinated by natural science. She would observe birds, animals and sea life, sketching them for hours. Admitting it was the "aberrations" and "mutations" that enticed her, Trask recalls wanting to be part of everything she witnessed. Before receiving her MFA in metalsmithing from SUNY, New Paltz—enriched by courses in alchemy and early sciences—she obtained a BFA in metalsmithing from Massachusetts College of Art. While an undergraduate in Boston, she pursued additional studies in archeology, anthropology and biology at the University of Massachusetts. The zoology section at Harvard's historic Peabody Museum of Archeology and Ethnology, in nearby Cambridge, beckoned her with its taxonomy displays, but she was equally intrigued by the museum's musty setting, and her artworks referentially transports us to *Wunderkabinetten* (cabinets of curiosities) or the nostalgic interiors of old natural history museums, places where ontological miracles abound.

Trask makes pieces that may be worn or hung on a wall, are freestanding and occasionally even meander. Metaphorically, her pieces stand for the confluence of living beings since prehistory. She speaks of an epiphany, experienced during a lecture in biological anthropology, about 25 years ago, when she learned that the salinity of human blood, sweat and tears was comparable to the "primordial soup" found in millennia-old tide pools. Marvel at this phenomenological relationship between organisms and their natural habitat is the guiding principle of her oeuvre.

Trask began her practice in 1995 by fabricating disc-shaped vials from silver, gold and/or palladium, each one filled with pure pigment, powdered metal, mica, gemstones, peacock or pheasant feathers, butterfly or dragonfly wings, leaf fragments or bits of fabric, in enigmatic but purposeful correlations and/or combinations, which she would link together to create necklaces, pendants, brooches, rings and earrings. Akin to specimen jars in old laboratories

Intrinsecus, from "Vestig" series, 2010
found and altered 18th-century Italian gilded wood frame, bone, teeth, antlers from python, rattlesnake, whitetail deer, buffalo, badger, coyote, raccoon, porcupine, sterling silver, 23.5k gold (all ethically sourced)
84 x 60 x 10"
COLLECTION OF MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN, NEW YORK

or antique pharmacies, each ampule focuses upon the saturated colors, trompe-l'oeil surfaces and variegated textures of the diverse substances placed within. Protected by watch crystals, the modules are sensuously tactile, inviting you to run your thumb along the smooth glass surfaces in contemplation of the microcosmic worlds that beckon from below. Surprisingly, the discipline of this encapsulation offers no hint of the exuberance that would follow in subsequent works.

Over a decade later, Trask introduced a body of work with the overarching theme of "Unnatural Histories." Begun in 2007–08, these ecological studies, she says, "delve into our precarious, at times contentious, relationship with nature." In the first phase of this series, she views humankind as separate from the environment. Interspecies hybrids with fictitious names teem within an ecosystem that we can only observe rather than mediate, as entities evolve beyond our control. With *Flourish* (2008), the second chapter of "Unnatural Histories," adaptation traverses not only species but classification between flora and fauna, animate and inanimate, vital and demised, in motion and inert. In stunning tableaux, jewels, representing mythical "vegetation," are located in situ, bursting forth from painted backgrounds that provide context. In *Bolted Vine,* a large intertwining necklace teases its supporting wall mount, which it both augments and engages.

Metaphorically, her pieces stand for the confluence of living beings since prehistory.

Boundaries are violated, dimensions stretched, picture planes expanded, and adornment redefined. Technically, these assemblages follow a unique procedure whereby Trask meticulously fuses altered botanical drawings, found in the public domain, onto the quasi-translucent surface of encaustic, a wax medium she champions due to its potential for visual depth and capacity for layering and erosion. Both the panels and surrounding frames are embellished with numerous devices in atypical combinations that include precious and base metals, precious and semiprecious stones and repurposed objects. The brooch, panel and frame of *Corona Imperialis* are set with diamonds, the brooch assimilating steel watch hands as well—an offbeat addition to such an elegant piece. *Apophysis: Plumb* and *Fructus Plumbum*

Fructus Plumbum in Frame, from "Unnatural Histories" series, 2008
brooch: 18k and 22k gold, snake vertebrae, aquamarine, rainbow moonstones, lead frame
panel: encaustic, lead leaves, moonstones, aquamarine
overall: 10 x 9 ¾"
brooch: 4 x 3 ½"

Immutable, bones are touchstones, constant reminders of lives lived.

contain lead, *Vulgaris (Wheat)* and *Crinoid: Sea Lilies* steel, with the latter sporting jewelers' saw blades, the former Japanese beetles. Jewels of complementary subject and materials are attached to their hosts by incorporated display apparatus. These "paintings" are fully resolved artworks, due to their pictorial strength, with or without the jewels, as denuded armatures blend into, but, at the same time, enhance the overall composition. Conversely, necklaces, brooches or earrings are complete statements, independent of their backdrops. *Xenograft* is the acme of *Flourish,* emblematic of interspecies organ-tissue grafts. In the appended brooch, a branch of gold and carnelian "flora" appears to grow out of "fauna," actually a deer bone stalk.

Flourish is a parable of transmutation, not just of organisms but of aesthetic disciplines (painting, sculptural relief and jewelry) expressive of mankind's desire to synthesize nature by devising genetically engineered creatures and plants. Throughout *Flourish*, as well as in Trask's ensuing works, the salient feature is bone. Bones are, in fact, the core of Trask's practice. "Used literally to express definitive physical sensation and emotional sentiment," says Trask, "bone is considered the absolute reductive essence of our physical selves." Regarded as auspicious, skeletal remains were often preserved by ancient cultures, interred a second time after decomposition in ossuaries (vaultlike receptacles) made from ceramic or stone (just as the later Christians maintained saints' bones within metal or wooden reliquaries, often bejeweled). Bones were salvaged as an act of reverence, some believed to possess spiritual properties. Immutable, bones are touchstones, constant reminders of lives lived. But bones denote so much more to Trask. Once overwhelmed by an X-ray of herself, she views their structure as a universal motif of support, seen equally in architectural columns and furniture. Bones, furthermore, provide "evolutionary biographies," she says, by revealing scientific evidence of the possessor's environment, habits, diet, illnesses, traumas, etc. One learns about the natural world, and particularly its shared features, by "what is written in our bones," states Trask, commenting on how heavy metals, lead, copper, and iron, for example, bind not only to flora but to the bones of fauna as well. As erudite as she is skilled, Trask's aim is to help us "reclaim a sense of wonder as to the purpose of such meticulous [nature-based] arrangements." One of her favorite aphorisms is *Devo farmé le ossa*, translated from the Italian as "I need to make my bones," i.e., "I need to build my strength," or, by extension, "I must be true to my nature."

In 2010, Trask completed the seminal work of her groundbreaking "Vestige" series, *Intrinsecus,* commissioned for "Dead or Alive," an exhibition at New York's Museum of Arts and Design that examined artworks made from nature's bounty, in all its manifestations. Addressing the museum setting, and its timeworn practice of isolating examples and ideals of beauty by stylizing natural phenomena, *Intrinsecus* was created using a carved foliate wood and gilt 18th-century Italian picture frame, in addition to silver, rattlesnake and python ribs, antlers from a white-tailed deer, and bone, or teeth, from buffalo, badger, coyote, raccoon and porcupine—all ethically sourced. *Intrinsecus,* with its clever title alluding to the inherent nature of both its components and composition, heralded Trask's future practice and led to *Acanthus*, made from bits of a 17th-century frame, deer antler, 18k gold wire, and gold leaf, the first in a series of dynamic, wearable necklaces.

In her chimeric universe of biological role reversal, Trask utilizes actual fauna to create flora, one blossom taking several months to complete. Peonies are constructed from deer skulls, their stems from antlers. Chrysanthemum petals are in actuality rattlesnake ribs. Tulips might be fabricated from the scapulae of coyotes or porcupines. A sculptural relief, *Limb* (2012), is created from a giraffe's femur inlaid with bone and strips of wood. *Nests* (2011), formed from dense agglomerations of circularized bone threads, nestles gently in the palm of your hand, while *Burgeon* (2010), a massive, unbridled sculpture,

Queen Anne's Lace (object), 2013
sewing needles, python ribs
10 x 10 x 6"

Umi, 2012
found fragments from 18th- and 19th-century frames, antler, bone, graphite, gold leaf
22 x 16 x 5"

Suture, 2014
found and altered objects, deer bone, wood, 23k gold leaf, gesso, 23k gold wire, brass
17 x 12 x 10"

Trask's fundamental approach touches people not only aesthetically but on the most profound level.

incorporates as many as 3,500 bone fragments and animal teeth; its largest flower, an orange-tinted mum, compiled from 400 different parts, including python ribs, beaver teeth and cow bone, is surrounded by "vines" whittled from deer antlers and "blooms" from the jawbones of white-tailed deer. Individual selection is deliberate. Elements must be found that fit together precisely and flaunt the perfect twist or curve.

Trask's passion for antique frames connects with her regard for bones via their common capacity to be converted into something else; a felled tree is transformed into a functional wooden object, then altered again as repurposed fragments. Once-thriving vegetation is thus displaced by its new status as artificial leaves—nature deconstructed. Frames, used whole as surrounds for the jeweled tableaux in *Flourish*, as well as the realigned shards in *Vestige*, harken back to 16th- and 17th-century Dutch and Flemish *vanitas* paintings, in still-lifes that typically combine rotting fruit and/or flowers with skulls and other symbols, such as an hourglass or watch, indicating the brevity of earthly pleasures. In 2013, due to her predilection for the formal language of Baroque fine and decorative art, Trask was invited to participate in an exhibition, *In Dialogue with the Baroque*, at the Neues Schloss Schleissheim, an early-18th-century palace modeled after Versailles located just outside Munich. Here she contributed necklaces and brooches of bone and frame scraps, in her signature scrollwork style, eminently compatible with the boldly ornamental sensibility being celebrated.

Pride is the subject of *Umi* ("waves" in Japanese), a 2012 wall piece inspired by the 19th- century woodblock prints of Hokusai as well as contemporary seascape photographs by Hiroshi Sugimoto. A frame, composed of 17th-, 18th- and 19th-century carved and gilded "acanthus leaves," surrounds an oval "mirror" of opaque polished graphite that provides no reflection. Both the stylized leaves of the frame and gentle ripples of the graphite panel recall "waves" "stirred" by a deer antler rising from the frame's lower center, the whole an allegory for the perpetual dialogue between earth, sea, beast and humbled humanity.

Trask's most recent works (2013–14) are once again edging toward restraint. *Bone/Black, Landscape 2, Ossa Diptych, Corner Study* and *Encroachment* observe limitations within confined territories. The bone fragments in *Landscape 2,* and *Ossa Diptych,* are partially submerged within an enclosed pool of cast resin—"a literal slice of landscape" to Trask—although other particles, most prominently spliced antlers in the former, employ an upward trajectory inferring, in Trask's words, "fertile ground for new ideas and cultures built on the[se] bones or prior ones… ." *Bone/Black,* aptly titled after a pigment made from actual charred bone, and *Suture*

riff on the concept of duality. The former, consisting of a pair of chain-tethered square shadow boxes, one light and one dark, addresses the conjunction of chemical structure and biological origin, commonly viewed as opposites, though, in reality, mutually dependent.

Suture, one of Trask's most recent sculptures, adds yet another dimension, in its parallel references to domestic pursuits. This tabletop assemblage is composed of four deer skulls, "sewn" together with 23k gold wire, from which a needle hangs to form a circular "embroidery hoop" surrounded by a clock casing, the whole mounted within the metal frame of an antique vanity mirror. Trask queries: "Is [it] being stitched together or pulled apart[?]…[Is it] a story being recorded, observed, studied or unraveled?" And, one might ask, does the clock case allude to such timepieces in *vanitas* paintings, reminding us of life's short duration?

Trask is enamored of traditional materials and age-old techniques that strengthen her multilayered narratives. Gesso, the usual base for paintings and gold leaf, is calcium carbonate, made up of stone, eggshell and seashell; it is a basic building block for many life forms. *Suture, Encroachment, Effloresce* and *Ossa Study #1* contain gesso as one of numerous ingredients. *Corner Study* and the right half of *Ossa Diptych* indicate a return to prior experiments with encaustic, a medium she finds soothingly meditative; one which she can approach slowly in a looser, less precise manner, its submissiveness allowing her ample opportunity to embed objects and images within her pictures.

Trask's methodology is intuitive. She states: "I…see the relationships and depth of associations after the fact." Her aim is evocation rather than illustration, experience rather than symbolism. Impeccable craftsmanship and love of process were instilled early on by watching her grandfather paint his wooden boat surrounded by tools. By directing us to contextualize living things, regarding each as one portion of an interdependent cosmos, Trask offers promise for a united future. She elevates the cycle of existence, ameliorating decay and death by "transforming… detritus…into 'living' art" as a "transmutational magician who confront[s] mortality through metamorphosis."[1]

Esteemed by both fellow artists and arts professionals, Trask's work is included in numerous museum collections.[2] She shares a lovely Hudson Valley home with her partner, distinguished artist Sergey Jivetin. Her studio is packed with nature's castoffs, the debris left by desiccated animals, plants, and insects. Organized by type, bones spill forth from huge plastic tubs; beetles line drawers, their iridescence contrasting with pearly white eggshells scattered throughout; boxes of broken frames are everywhere; walls display photos, diagrams and drawings of flora, fauna, furniture, flatware, anything that captivates her.

Trask's fundamental approach touches people not only aesthetically but on the most profound level. Collectors have inquired about her creating works from their deceased pets' bones. She has received commissions for pendants and lockets to house human ashes—not just as commemoration and a means to remain literally connected to the beloved, but through people's recognition of the opportunity for rebirth and renewal through the implicit optimism of Trask's art. This is the basis of her affecting achievement: a positive energy that pulsates throughout awe-inspiring works, drawing us to our roots. Her art offers hope. It encourages introspection. It focuses on the commonalities of all beings, instead of the differences. It fosters cooperation rather than antipathy. It speaks of a bright future. It demystifies death. It asserts that we're all in this together.

Bone/Black, 2014
wood, found objects, 23k gold leaf, bone, antler
dimensions variable; box on right approx. 10"

1. David Revere McFadden, "Hunters and Gatherers," in David Revere McFadden and Lowery Stokes Sims, *Dead or Alive* (exh. cat. New York: Museum of Arts and Design, 2010), 19.
2. The Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC; Houston Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas; Arkansas Arts Center, Little Rock, Arkansas, as well as the Museum of Arts and Design, New York, and Newark Museum, Newark, New Jersey, to name a few.

Toni Greenbaum is a Brooklyn-based art historian specializing in twentieth- and twenty-first-century jewelry and metalwork.

Remains of the Day Contemporary Reliquaries

BY LYNN COOL

GINA WESTERGARD
Flor de Muerto, 2013
sterling, copper, gold leaf, black onyx, paint
4 ¼ x 4 ¼ x 4 ¼"
PHOTO: AARON PADEN

BECKY MCDONAH
Lost Connection: A Reliquary for the Telephone Cord, 2012
copper, sterling, fine silver, pearls, onyx, enamel, telephone parts
11 x 6 x 6"
PHOTO: BECKY MCDONAH

VENETIAN
Crescent of al-Zahir, 1350
Fatimid rock crystal, gilded silver mounting
Collection Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum
PHOTO: LYNN COOL

THOUGH SEPARATED BY thousands of years, an Egyptian sarcophagus within a pyramid, a Christian altar casket in a Gothic church, a Buddhist saint's *sarira* in a pagoda, and Jewish *tefillin* boxes that bind the word of God on the body, all contain a precious substance in a sanctified space. As reliquaries and relics, their stratified yet interdependent relationships slip between ritual, devotion, and commemoration.

The Latin *reliquiae,* meaning things "left behind," provides an etymological underpinning for a vast thematic territory. In conjunction with its reliquary, a relic that is connected to a significant person, place or event aspires to transcend time and invite devotion. In addition to sanctifying a church, a Christian reliquary and its relic once brought prestige, power and wealth to a city through an influx of thousands of pilgrims yearning to be transformed. While the carved, jeweled caskets of early Byzantine reliquaries obscured saintly remains, later versions featured viewing windows.[1] Often bearing no resemblance to its interior relic, the medieval arm-shaped reliquary was chosen, as art historian Cynthia Hahn asserts, for its "potential for touch and gesture."[2] These so-called "speaking reliquaries" reverberate between container and contained, communicating to the devout on multiple levels.[3]

It is intriguing to ponder the origins of the reliquary object, *Crescent of al-Zahir.* It is not known when, nor how, its 11th-century Fatimid rock crystal crescents, inscribed with a Kufic prayer to the reigning caliph, were transferred into the Venice treasury—only that in 1350 they were used to create a monstrance reliquary for a relic embellished with gold-threaded leaves and tiny pearl flowers.[4] Missing since the 19th century, its finial cross would have been a jarring cultural revision that counters with the rock crystal's affiliation with the Islamic world. The *al-Zahir* reliquary—with its cathedral architecture, near mystical, crystal crescents composed as an ethereal halo, and jewel-like central relic—presents a rich multilayered message, with all of its components coalescing to form an object of heavenly spirituality. Whatever the motivation for this consolidation, the amalgamated treasure represents a unique and imaginative object of devotion.

A contemporary work with a similar hybridity grew from Lin Stanionis's fascination with decorative ornamentation, creation myths and religious imagery. Her brooch *In illo tempore* is an expressive composite driven by an orchestration of movement. At the center of a cartouche, a shield appears to have been thrust with so much force that its edges melt against the impact. This action creates a golden drip-edged halo that radiates around a ground of tiny feathers prong-set with fossils and precious gemstones. Like the *Crescent of al-Zahir's* inter-blended timeframes and cultures, Stanionis's piece is a collision of physics, geology and anthropology and remains open to broad interpretation.

LIN STANIONIS
In illo tempore, 2012
18k and 24k yellow gold, tanzanite, dinosaur bones, pearls
4 x 3 ¼ x ½"
PHOTO: JON BLUMB

To the contemporary artist, the reliquary format offers complex themes including commemoration, transformation, embodiment and fragmentation.

To the contemporary artist, the reliquary format offers complex themes including commemoration, transformation, embodiment and fragmentation, especially when involving a visually accessible relic. Paul Thek's "Technological Reliquaries," from the mid-1960s, combined geometric minimalism with a visceral component, such as a resin body cast or an unidentifiable chunk of flesh, visible within vitrines or cagelike grills, that speak about the body and its corruption. More recently, the collaborative reliquaries of Tim Tate and Marc Petrovich offer the duality of a visually accessible, yet impenetrable, glass barrier. Featuring found objects, hand blown glass elements and small video monitors, these works are a multisensual exploration of the human condition.[5]

The materiality of glass becomes an integral aspect of Becky McDonah's *Lake Defense: Reliquary for Mosquito Repellent.* McDonah retains the fervency of the divine, expressed through secular terms. The glass vitrine's partial accessibility, implies the relic's supreme worth and possible instability. The message of a prime element, in this case the bottled insect repellent formula, is further conveyed through the architectonic substrate of the reliquary itself. Beneath the bottle hangs a register of blood droplets; the deep red column overlaid with a weblike craquelure supports an outer ring of warning capsules; and at the base large metal mosquitoes dive headlong into troughs filled with a blood-like substance. In *Lost Connection: A Reliquary for the Telephone Cord,* McDonah abandons the glass membrane for a full relic-to-reliquary fusion of anthropomorphic telephone poles and inanimately splayed phone cord. Here the industrial relic opposes the ornamented reliquary base, embellished with twisted wire and jewels. Like souvenirs, or snapshots, McDonah's evocative relics are conduits of experience communicated through the reliquary framework.

Organic growth, a recurring thematic of reliquaries, is a favored metaphor for Gina Westergard, who creates both functional and symbolic funerary urns and reliquaries. In *Flor de Muerto,* the central element can be removed from the composite vessel of bowl forms, allowing one to carry the deceased's remains within a hinged compartment. The starkness of a hammer-textured silver exterior amplifies the interior's green foliage and dying blooms that convey a yearning for renewal. Although precisely serrated leaf edges seem to reverberate with the inevitability of decay and death, the work's vertical orientation directs one's attention upward to infer the promise of an eternal afterlife.

BECKY MCDONAH
Lakefront Defense: A Reliquary for Mosquito Repellent, 2000
copper, sterling, glass, citronella, repellent
15 x 11 x 11"
PHOTO: ALAN MCCOY

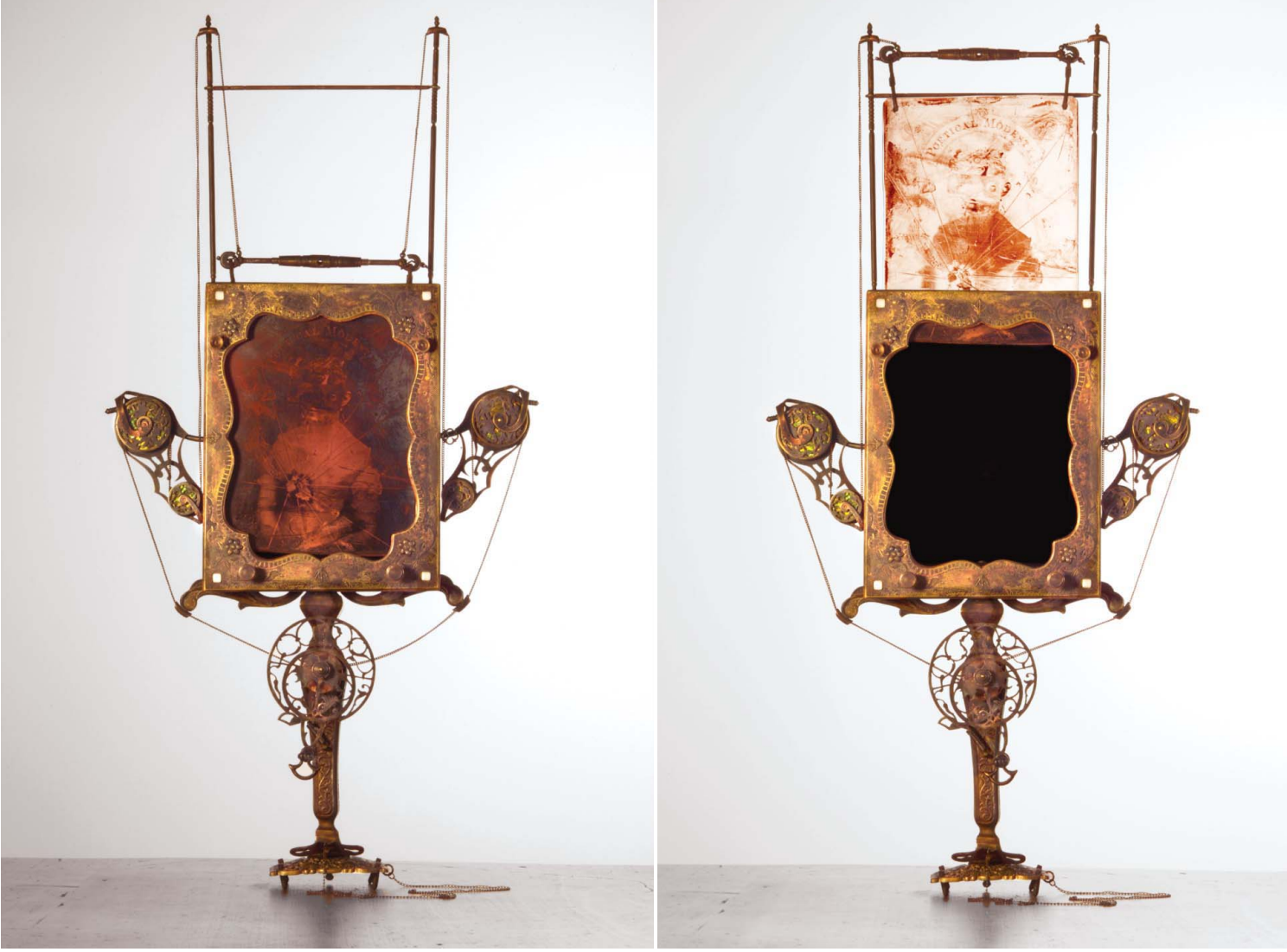
JOE MUENCH
Hank, 2012
brass, steel, sterling silver, slate
5 x 7 x 5 ½"
PHOTO: INSIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

While Westergard's reliquary has the ability to house actual remains, Joe Muench's *Hank* intermixes both physical and metaphorical aspects. When the lid is removed and placed alongside the box, an intriguing diptych reveals itself. The lid's straightforward portrait of an intricately chased and repousséd man contrasts with the interior's stepped plateau that hosts a seductive abstraction hovering above a slate bottom. Endowed with a metaphysical energy, the torqued anticlastic relic is Muench's original, yet it also references Heikki Seppa's iconic Hyperbolic Paraboloid Extension. As a prime signifier, the relic's enshrinement communicates a reverence not only for the metalsmith's teacher, but also for the life-changing experience of enlightenment and growth.

Much like the late-antiquity practice of *spolia* (the reuse of architectural materials on new monuments), a modern-day found object can become a vehicle for creative subtexts. In near-surrealist fashion, Truike Verdegaal constructs a dialogue between her subject's bodily memento and juxtaposed found objects. In 2013, the Apeldoorn foundation commissioned the Dutch goldsmith to design a commemorative ring as part of the biennial Wilhelmina oeuvre-prize awarded to sculptor Hans van Houwelingen. To express the sculptor's ability to merge the historical and contemporary spheres, Verdegaal bezel-set van Houwelingen's two wisdom teeth within a gold crosshatched engraved ring. *Wilhelmina-ring (seal ring) for HvH* is a transmutation that can literally impress the dental relic—the very essence of the artist—into permeable wax, clay or paper, thereby substantiating the sculptor's character, prestige and autonomy. When not worn, the ring lives within a found fuse box, in itself a semiotic tie to van Houwelingen's unbending artistic convictions—in Verdegaal's words, his propensity for "sinking his teeth into his work" and persisting "until the fuse has blown."[6]

TRUIKE VERDEGAAL
Wilhelmina-ring (seal ring) for HvH,
2013
18k gold, sterling silver, old fuse casket, polish brushes, wisdom-teeth of Dutch artist H.v.H.
casket, 4 x 2 ¾ x 1 ⅝"
PHOTO: EDDO HARTMANN

In a sense, all artists who incorporate found objects are connected to the reliquary, especially those who have researched its history. Joseph Cornell's reliquary-like organizations of the humble and ephemeral draw the viewer in, as if to decode some universal truth. Like Cornell, Keith Lo Bue integrates a plethora of materials



KEITH LO BUE
Poetical Modesty, 2010
antique glass with fused digital imagery, leather, steel, 19th-century carved wooden box, candelabra, brass, plated copper chain, cherry wood, dyed paua shell, turnbuckle, 18th- and 19th-century coins, clock winding key, nickel silver, silk velvet, Czech crystal, steel key, brass drawer pull, waxed linen thread, fresh water pearls, steel wire, brass flowers, soil
23 ½ x 11 ¾ x 4 ⅜"

into his works, and incorporates glass or magnifying lenses to protect, obscure or enlarge the relic. In his *Poetical Modesty,* glass becomes the elemental object-turned-subject within which viewers may be transfixed. Lo Bue reconfigures a 19th-century glass ambrotype photo as a digitally fused image, then enlivens this Victorian portrait of a woman by creating a kinetic multi-sensual experience. In a video of the piece in action, Lo Bue presents an altered perception of time through tightly framed camera shots of enmeshing chain-driven gears and a ratchety raising and lowering of the ambrotype. Thus the viewer witnesses the unfolding of simultaneously ponderous and fleeting existence.

In a sense, all artists who incorporate found objects are connected to the reliquary.

Hungarian-American Agnes Pal avoids the traditional reliquary form but retains its associations through references to Holocaust survivorship. The wearer of *Icy*

AL FARROW
Trigger Finger of Santa Guerra (VIII), 2007
bullets, guns, glass, shot, steel, bone
19 x 16 ½ x 16 ½"
IMAGE COURTESY OF
CATHARINE CLARK GALLERY

Descent, a brooch with a rough-hewn upper register, diagonally traversing silver wires, and an unfaceted aquamarine, becomes a living reliquary, archiving Pal's experience of a forced-march camp relocation down a mountain. In another reliquary of personal and collective memory, Pal's sculpture *Numbered* raises the question, "What would it take to burst someone's spirit?"[7] Two hundred and twenty-four copper squares, hydraulically constrained into wrinkled, torn domes, bear portraits that symbolically represent family, friends and neighbors she noticed missing after the war.

All of the artists here are united through their ties to the reliquary, but each follows his or her own schematic.

Re-contextualized religious iconography offers much to contemplate within Al Farrow's sculpture. Farrow entices the viewer to closely examine his works' intricacies, in what appear to be medieval body-part

reliquaries, domed caskets and architectural places of worship. Only at point-blank range do we discover that the works are constructed of weapon and armillary parts. In contrast, the interior of a domed shrine in *Trigger Finger of Santa Guerra (VIII)* presents a human digit as the relic of Farrow's imagined saint. Through the work's materials and loaded architecture, the viewer is confronted with political commentary—literal and implied. Farrow asserts that the works' narratives do not criticize any particular group, but reflect his distaste for war that is often entangled with religion. And he is careful to avoid creating sculpture in direct conflict with a particular religion's edicts.[8]

Whereas Farrow questions the essence of religion, Kristin Diener's jewelry—with its exuberant conglomerations of glass eyes, toys, and beads—appears to channel and celebrate the multiethnic material culture of the Southwest Native American, Russian Orthodox and her own Amish and Mennonite backgrounds. Sharing ties to potent carriers of remembrance, such as pilgrim badges, memento mori and Victorian mourning jewelry, her pendant *Anti-War Medal: Nighty Night* masquerades its relic as a naïve bauble, but its peacefully sleeping cherub enclosed within a chain-linked bomb cloud asks the viewer to consider the potential of ultimate demise. A deceptively simple jewelry object, Diener's piece is eloquent as a relic abstraction of war's inherent outcome.

All of the artists here are united through their ties to the reliquary, but each follows his or her own schematic, with expressly divergent outcomes. In medieval Western Europe, the reliquary and relic helped guide and inspire those seeking reassurance of life after death. We may not be similarly transfigured by an object in the contemporary world. Nonetheless, the works here engage us in meaningful ways through their constructs of memory. Like these artists, we may delve further into the essence of the sublime through objects that speak with the voices of reliquaries and their relics.

1. Caroline Walker Bynum, "Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body" in *Medieval Religion*, New York: Zone Books, 271.
2. Cynthia Hahn, "The Voices of the Saints: Speaking Reliquaries," *Gesta* 36, no.1 (1997):20.
3. Ibid.
4. Avinoam Shalem, "Histories of Belonging and George Kubler's Prime Object," *Getty Research Journal*, no. 3 (2011): 3.
5. See Julie K. Hanus, "2 by 2," *American Craft*, vol. 71, no.2.
6. Truike Verdegaal, communication with author, April 27, 2014.
7. Agnes Pal, communication with author, December 2005.
8. Al Farrow, YouTube.com, April 30, 2014. See also Jennifer Cross Gans, "Al Farrow: Peaceable Provocateur," *Metalsmith*, vol. 30, no.3, and Roy Stevenson, "Al Farrow's Modern-Day Reliquaries," *Sculpture*, vol. 30, no.6.

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AGNES PAL
Icy Descent, 2004
sterling silver, aquamarine
2 ½ x 2 x 1"
PHOTO: DON CASPER

KRISTIN DIENER
Anti-War Medal: Nighty Night, 2007
sterling silver, fine silver, brass, synthetic ruby, toy, steel wire, ribbon
3 ¼ x 2 ¾ x ⅝"
PHOTO: MARGOT GEIST

David Bielander
Man of Ideas

BY LIESBETH DEN BESTEN

Still Life diorama, from the "Demiurg" exhibition installation view at Artothek & Bildersaal, Munich, 2014
mixed media
PHOTO: DIRK EISL

Still Life (detail), from the "Demiurg" exhibition installation, 2014
mixed media
PHOTO: DIRK EISL

Mund (brooch), 1998
steel crown cap, coral cabochon, red gold
1 3/8 x 3/4 x 3/4"
PHOTO: SIMON BIELANDER

POSTERS FEATURING A STRIKING self-portrait of David Bielander decorated advertising columns all around Munich last March, during the city's two most important jewelry fairs and events: "Inhorgenta" and "Schmuck."

"Demiurg" presents Bielander's versatile jewelry and objects in an exceptional new way.

The artist's bust is depicted in full color, his semblance completely composed of his own jewelry pieces: sausages, berries, pearl pig, banana, scampi, slugs, shells, owl, stone face and rat all artfully arranged in a tribute to the 16th-century painter Arcimboldo. The poster advertised "Demiurg," David Bielander's most recent exhibition, which has been traveling in Europe since 2013. It opened at the Museum of Modern Art Arnhem (NL), touched the Munich Artothek (a city-run art space) and Gallery Format in Bergen (Norway), and will end its tour in the MUDAC (Museum of Design and Contemporary Applied Arts) in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 2016.

"Demiurg" presents Bielander's versatile jewelry and objects in an exceptional new way. Five different

DAVID BIELANDER
"Demiurg" exhibition poster, 2013
composite of artist's jewelry pieces

Dummy Heads (pins), from
"What are you gawping at?" series, 1999
pacifier tips, akoya pearls, silver
each approx. ¾ x ¾ x 1 ⅛"
PHOTO: DAVID BIELANDER

Pink Snail (brooch), 1999
rubber glove, snail shell, gold pin
4 ⅜ x 1 ½ x 1 ½"
PHOTO: DAVID BIELANDER

dioramas were created to enhance the experience and understanding of his work. The title of the show references *Demiurg,* the Platonic philosophical concept of the artisan, a figure charged with the responsibility of creating and maintaining the physical universe. The Demiurg creates the material world after "the model of the *Idea*," which in Plato's philosophy is the most fundamental kind of reality. The title of the exhibition is more than just playful. Indeed, one could say that for Bielander, the Idea is his utmost reality. While it can take years before he finds the right way to realize an idea, the idea is always a reality in his mind.

Both the "Demiurg" exhibition and the Arcimboldoesque portrait were conceived in response to the Françoise van den Bosch Prize in contemporary jewelry, which he received in 2012. It was Bielander's wish to present his works in an entirely new way and avoid a conventional overview of his work; hence the specially designed dioramas that provide thematic context to the pieces. The five worlds—Still Life, European Forest, Snake Pit, Hall of Mirrors and Koi Pond—were developed in partnership with the Dutch design studio Aandacht. Wallcoverings, made from collages of details of his jewelry, form the backgrounds and create the atmosphere of each world. The effect is mesmerizing; a treat and a challenge to the eye.

The international success of David Bielander is intriguing. It is as if he has been around for decades, but in fact the Basel-born artist established his studio, together with Helen Britton and Yutaka Minegishi (the three continue to share space), in Munich only in 2002. His work has been appealing and remarkable since the very start, beginning with the cheeky *Smoke Ring Machine* (1996) made while he was a student of Otto Künzli's at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Munich. As an installation, the piece has now gained a new life in the "Demiurg" exhibition.

When Bielander started his studies in Munich, he already had a "history" as a goldsmith, like many of Künzli's students, having worked in a goldsmith's studio in Switzerland. Says Bielander, "I was not interested in jewelry at all, but I enjoyed the resistance of metal and the fire. I did a four-year apprenticeship in this studio, but as a matter of fact I wanted to study fashion." At a jewelry fair in Basel he met Georg Spreng, of Frog Design, the high-end fashion jewelry brand that specializes in colorful precious jewelry. Bielander felt attracted by the skills of this designer, who was washing gold and platinum with gems in an incredible way. "Spreng had a fearless approach," says Bielander, "which also showed in the way he dressed, for instance in flowered stockings." Possibly more impressed by Spreng's fancy character than by his jewelry, Bielander went to Schwäbisch Gmünd to work in the Spreng Studio where jewelry was designed and produced. "Making jewelry was a hindrance," he recalls. "I found the idea of showing off skills in my own work appalling." In talking with Bielander, he makes it clear that contemporary jewelry can require effort. It's not a thing you adopt just

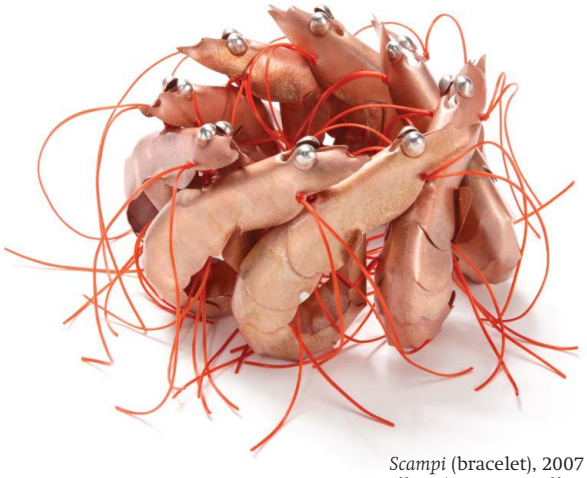
like that; you have to understand, to commit, and to make it your own. In 1989, during the first year of his apprenticeship with Spreng, he visited the "Ornamenta" exhibition, in Pforzheim, but as he states: "I couldn't bring together what they were doing and what I was doing. I saw a Nel Linssen piece (a simple paper construction) and found it beautiful but foreign. I couldn't connect it with what I was doing at that time. It was like two completely different occupations."

Indeed, one could say that for Bielander, the Idea is his utmost reality.

In 1995 Bielander visited the Haldenhof (now called the Zimmerhof) symposium, organized by Ruudt Peters and Iris Eichenberg, (both from the Rietveld Academy's jewelry department in Amsterdam). This introduction to the contemporary jewelry scene convinced him to leave Georg Spreng and to continue his studies either in Amsterdam, London or Munich. He chose Munich after exploring the work of Künzli, whose ideas, he determined, were very near to his own. At his Munich interview he presented his *Navel Watching Piece*, a work that later formed the basis of his "Teats" brooches (2002).

Bielander entered Kunzli's jewelry class armed with a sketchbook, which he had titled *"How can I prevent jewelry from being worn?"* In this notebook he collected

Slugs, 2006
oxidized silver
dimensions variable



Scampi (bracelet), 2007
silver (copper anodized), elastic
4 x 4 x 2 3/8"
edition of 12
PHOTO: SIMON BIELANDER

Tyre (bracelet), 2010
patinated silver
4 x 4 x 1 ½"
edition of 12
PHOTO: SIMON BIELANDER

Face of Rock (brooch), 2003
agate, amethyst, silver, steel
PHOTO: SIMON BIELANDER

various ideas. One of his first pieces was *Little Porthole* (1997), an object to be integrated in a hole in one's clothing. Obviously, Bielander had ambivalent feelings about jewelry during his first two years in Munich. But, as a result of continuing discussions at the jewelry department and the creation of his first genuine piece of jewelry—the folded bottle cap *Mouth* brooch (1998)—he eventually overcame this drawback by taking a different approach, working only on transforming found materials rather than fully fabricating pieces. His "What are you gawping at?" brooches (1999), made from baby pacifiers with pearl eyes, and the *Pink Snail* (1999), from a rubber glove, snail shell and gold pin, are examples of his first such transformations. The *Lip* brooch (1999), made from a rubber jar seal, is another case of his method, which he describes as follows: "Suppose I want to make a mouth, and then I find this rubber ring. That's my playground. I don't have to create, I react." Through this approach jewelry became acceptable for him—it was his entree into jewelry design.

Bielander's "Slugs" brooches of 2006, were conceived as a family—Mom, Dad and two children —and produced in an unlimited edition, and his first pieces using sheet metal. Other examples of jewelry constructed from metal are his *Scampi* (2007) and *Tyre* bracelets (2010), the *Garlic* necklace (2009), *Gentian* brooch (2011) and the titanium *Python* necklaces (2011). Bielander either transforms existing materials or starts from scratch by cutting and folding metal sheet.

Over the years Bielander has become more and more interested in jewelry per se, often wondering, for example, why certain items should or shouldn't become a brooch. Like a slug, for instance. Bielander is very much aware that some themes such as the snake, the flower and the mouth are well researched within jewelry. But this does not hold him back from attempting his own version. On the contrary: the more familiar, the greater the attraction. As Bielander says, "It is so important to overcome this resistance and then to be persistent, to have a vocabulary of skills to get over what already looks closed. How can I get it to this first spark, that's the challenge."

Around 2000, figuration was quite unpopular in European contemporary jewelry; practice was based on abstraction and conceptualism. Therefore, Bielander's "Stone Face" brooches (2003) were met with disbelief and rejection at the time. Today, these brooches sell, thanks to the fact that Bielander created a larger figurative context for them but also because people have come to understand that figuration doesn't preclude conceptual thinking. It's now widely understood that Bielander's work encapsulates the general world and mores of jewelry in an unparalleled way.

As mentioned above, certain themes can sit in Bielander's mind for quite some time before they are resolved. An example is his sausage necklace (2009),

Python (necklace), 2011
titanium, silver
length 98 ½"
edition of 12
PHOTO: DIRK EISL

which is made in three variations: *Weisswurst, Frankfurter* and *Wienerle.* For someone unfamiliar with living in central Europe, it might be difficult to understand what makes a sausage such an appealing subject. It may help to explain it as a typical cultural property, with each type of sausage having its own recipe, form, structure and color, its own rituals and its own place of origin.

Over the years Bielander has become more and more interested in jewelry per se.

Bielander developed the idea of making a sausage necklace that would refer to banal popular items such as dogs' leashes made from plastic sausages and traditional real sausage decorations as they are used in folk culture. The idea was born and then the sausage was researched. What makes this slightly bent form? How do they move? In what kind of material could this be realized? Until one day he suddenly saw them in a bentwood Thonet chair. Bielander bought 12 chairs and cut them up—because, in his view, the form of the sausage was there already, it only needed to be released.

Gentian (brooch), 2011
titanium, gold 750
3 x 2 ¾ x 4 ⅓"
unlimited edition
PHOTO: DAVID BIELANDER

Koi (bracelet), 2012
thumb tacks, leather, silver clasp
5 ⅛ x 4 ⅜ x 3 ½"
PHOTO: DIRK EISL

Bielander can take years exploring materials before an idea for a piece of jewelry is realized in the most perfect way. The first snake necklace, for instance, was made in silver and although it was short it was still too heavy to reach the python length he envisioned (more than two-and-a-half yards long). Therefore he put the idea aside for some time. But when he was creating the *Gentian* brooch from a sheet of titanium, a material he'd never worked with before, and which can be anodized in an intense blue color, he knew he had found the perfect lightweight material for the python as well. Technically, the *Python* was first made using a hand saw and a blanking tool; but Bielander switched to laser cutting, an important advance that facilitated producing work in editions of 12 (unless indicated differently). He believes that the actual production should either be fun, as with the *Koi* bracelets (2012), which are made in unlimited editions, and of which the pattern of every piece differs, or it

"I'm not interested in provocation… and I'm not interested in making something ugly."

should be efficient, enabled by the use of molds, laser cutting or other specialized tools. Bielander describes the making of the *Koi* bracelets, with thumbtacks individually pierced through the leather form, as some kind of adventure: "You can't envision how it will be, but I know what I do. I can play with these tacks and if I don't experience that feeling of surprise, then it goes in the drawer and has to wait."

For Bielander it is very important that people like to wear his jewelry, that it is attractive and "that people look great with it; they shouldn't look odd." He likes to observe people wearing his work, who they are and how they do it. Some people manage to make the perfect match, such as a certain well-dressed elderly gentleman Bielander noticed in Munich wearing the *Lip* brooch on the lapel of his well-tailored suit. Bielander sees this as a "very positive" implication for jewelry. The man "is not suffering under his suit, his first mask," says Bielander. The jewelry is something extra, very personal, a very tiny social sign."

Bielander finds it a matter of importance that his pieces are robust and made to be used, without too many limitations. Therefore his works are "solved as a piece of jewelry, not as a sculpture you can also wear," as he states. Although he often works in quite large editions, which is the exception in the world of contemporary jewelry, every piece has a unique character, and is made by hand. For him there is not a huge difference between contemporary jewelry and traditional jewelry; in principle it is all the same, but he likes the metamorphosis and dislocation achievable in his own way of working.

One such transformation involved taking an African-made aluminum teapot and changing it into *Hannibal* (2011), an awkward elephant vase. He calls it "a play with the genres," taking something that is so close to souvenirs bought in trade fair markets, which "show us a rather stereotype notion of Africa" and bringing it into the context of his gallery. His "macramé" *Owl* (2005), a necklace made from brown-patina silver chain, embodies a similar dynamic. "It is so possessed with all that meaning, all those times you've seen [an owl] in books, films etc," he says, "then it becomes interesting to me. I'm not interested in provocation… and I'm not interested in making something ugly. It is the the fact that we have seen it so many times, together with the transformation, that makes it beautiful."

It is exactly this play with the jewelry genre that makes David Bielander such a consummate 21st-century jeweler. His concepts are not too obvious in the sense of being ironic or topical. Instead they are complementary to what we know, yet they are saucy. Saturated in traditions, skills and imagery, David Bielander is still able to tweak jewelry with his very own ideas.

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Hannibal (Baby), 2013
altered aluminum teapot
5 ⅛ x 4 ¾ x 8 ¼"
edition of 37
PHOTO: DIRK EISL

Northern African aluminum teapots from a trade fair market.

The Constructed Form
Architect–Designed Metalwork of the 20th Century

BY CINDI STRAUSS

JOSEPH MARIA OLBRICH
Wine Decanter, ca. 1901
pewter
MARGO GRANT WALSH
TWENTIETH CENTURY SILVER AND
METALWORK COLLECTION

GABRIELE DE VECCHI
Anselmo Pitcher from the "Speriment" series, 1982
sterling silver, plastic
MARGO GRANT WALSH TWENTIETH CENTURY SILVER AND METALWORK COLLECTION

FOR CENTURIES, ARCHITECTS have played a significant role in decorative arts and design history, through their designs for interiors, as well as for individual objects, that respond to stylistic tenets of their day. As early as the second half of the 19th century, William Morris, the celebrated British artist, writer and designer, argued for the importance of the architect's role in the decorative arts by stating that architects have a responsibility to create "a building with all the appliances fit for carrying on a dignified and happy life."[1] While this concept was not new—architects such as William Kent, Robert Adam, Daniel Marot, Percier et Fontaine, to name a few, had been designing objects for their buildings' interiors since the 18th century—Morris codified their importance to the design field while emphasizing the social implications for the objects that they created.

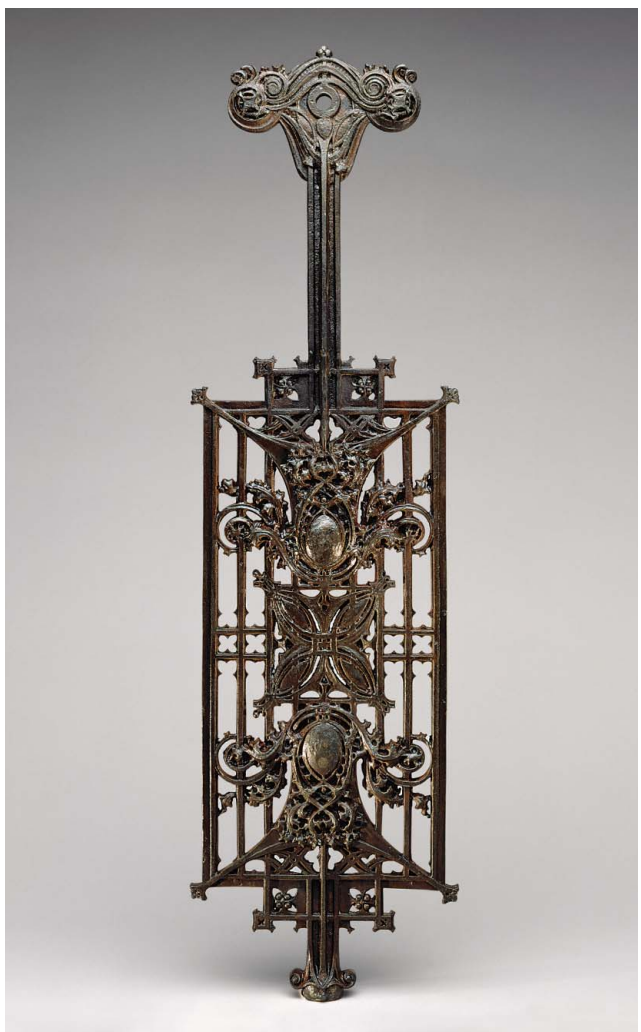
The period that spans the late 19th to early 20th centuries can be seen as the first modern heyday of architect-designers, in so far as architects were given artistic freedom by wealthy clients to develop residential, public, and commercial buildings and interiors that reflected the era's progressive taste. The success of many of these projects across Europe and America also elevated the public's awareness of the profession, as retailers and manufacturers began commissioning architects to design products, even using their names in advertisements, a marketing practice that continues to this day.

In recognition of these developments, architect-designed metalwork has become of great interest to collectors and museums, and is now a prime area of collecting at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. In the modern and contemporary periods, architects have continually returned to this medium, creating items that capture the changing nature of taste while reflecting the function of objects within society. Objects in this genre, including hollowware, flatware and architectural elements, are made from a variety of materials using a range of hand and, later, industrial techniques. Some designs are architectonic, others less so; many are functional, while others are purely ornamental; some are exceedingly rare, others were produced in large numbers. Yet all embody or predict the prevailing stylistic traits, making them important signifiers within the evolution of modern and contemporary design history.

Many significant examples of architect-designed metalwork date to the Arts and Crafts era, which roughly spanned the years from 1890 to 1920. These include a service for twelve, dating to 1912, of silver flatware by the Chicago-based Prairie School architect George Washington Maher. Designed for Rockledge, a grand home near Winona, Minnesota, that Maher created for businessman Ernest L. King and his wife, Grace Watkins King, and produced by the Gorham Manufacturing Company, the flatware features tiger lilies (the dominant motif of the house) and the Kings' monogram. The service was part of Gorham's Martelé ("hand-hammered") artistic line, which combined the stylistic tenets of the art nouveau and Arts and Crafts styles with the period's commitment to handmade works.

Rockledge, like many architect-designed residences of its time, represents a concept called *Gesamtkunstwerk*—a term used early in the 20th century by the architects, designers and artists of the Vienna Secession to describe their aesthetic goal of creating a total work of art in which all aspects of a building and its interiors are designed in harmony. Many architects throughout the world responded to the idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk* by designing objects for specific commissions. A rare example that speaks to this concept is Peter Behrens's *Fork and Spoon,* part of a silver flatware service he designed for his own home at the Darmstadt, Germany, arts colony around 1901. The pattern on each handle directly reflects the dining room's architectural ornamentation including the strapwork-patterned ceiling, etched mirrors and metal window grates, as well as the ornamentation and form of the furniture, linens and other dining accoutrements.

LOUIS SULLIVAN
Stair Baluster, ca. 1899
cast iron
THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS, HOUSTON DESIGN COLLECTION



GEORGE WASHINGTON MAHER
Flatware service from the Martelé line, ca. 1912
Martelé standard silver

The Darmstadt Artists' Colony can be seen as a utopian vision of *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The colony was established by the Grand Duke Ernst Ludwig of Hesse in 1899 as a center for Jugendstil architecture, design and decorative arts, whose purpose was to elevate public taste and instill a more recognizable and rigorous German style into the applied and architectural arts. The Duke invited several prominent German and Austrian Jugendstil architects and designers, including Behrens, Joseph Maria Olbrich, Patriz Huber and Hans Christiansen to erect and furnish buildings in Darmstadt as well as organize exhibitions of object designs to be held both at the colony and at international fairs. Olbrich, the Austrian architect and designer, was the head architect for

The period that spans the late 19th to early 20th centuries can be seen as the first modern heyday of architect-designers.

PETER BEHRENS
Fork and Spoon (Model No. 4800), ca. 1901
silver
MARGO GRANT WALSH TWENTIETH CENTURY SILVER AND METALWORK COLLECTION

BRUNO PAUL
Candelabrum, designed 1901
brass

JOSEF HOFFMANN
Flower Basket, 1909–10
silver, glass
THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS, HOUSTON DESIGN COLLECTION

Darmstadt from 1899 to 1908. In addition to his work for the colony, he also collaborated with German and Austrian manufacturers to make his objects available to a larger public. Olbrich strongly influenced the other artists wat Darmstadt with a design sensibility that favored fluid, linear ornament—an Austro-German version of the art nouveau style. A pewter *Decanter* from around 1901 exemplifies his vision, utilizing a peacock motif that often recurs as a symbol of the art nouveau. However, while Olbrich accented his decanter with characteristic decoration, its humble material speaks to the rising importance of industrialized production. Bruno Paul's iconic *Candelabra* from 1901 represents another aspect of German art nouveau: the rectilinear style. Twelve arms that swivel project from the shaft and are arranged in length and height treelike to form graduated tiers. The only surface decoration is a series of circular ribs that break with the traditional stylized plant forms so closely identified with art nouveau style.

Henry Van de Velde is recognized as one of the fathers of the art nouveau in Belgium.

The Viennese architect and designer Josef Hoffmann was one of the leading practitioners of *Gesamtkunstwerk* and his metalwork designs span both the Jugendstil and art deco styles. Hoffmann designed numerous flower baskets in nickel-plated or painted brass with simple rectilinear handles and structures of hand-cut perforated squares. The MFA Houston's example, however, is made from more costly sterling silver.[2] With a complex and delicate pattern of hand-cut and stylized floral perforation, the basket's architectonic form is enhanced by its shimmering surfaces as light catches its contours.

Henry Van de Velde is recognized as one of the fathers of the art nouveau in Belgium and he often translated his architectural interiors into objects of everyday use with organic motifs that harmoniously expressed the same

HENRY VAN DE VELDE
Ice Cream Set, ca. 1900–1905
silver, gilt
MARGO GRANT WALSH
TWENTIETH CENTURY SILVER AND
METALWORK COLLECTION

fluid style. Van de Velde's harnessing of the power of nature, most often rendered using curved, sinuous or "whiplash" lines, can be seen in the engraved parcel-gilt surfaces and forms of his rare *Ice Cream Set.*

Recent decades have seen a renewed interest on the part of manufacturers to work with celebrated architects to create functional objects. The development of these designs occurred simultaneously with the advent of postmodernism and led to a renaissance in commissioning architects to design objects that had not been seen since the first decades of the 20th century. Many of the objects outside of the realm of metalwork designed during this period had a theoretical basis, while others addressed issues of urbanism, in addition to aesthetics. These pieces, ranging from lighting to furniture, received acclaim primarily through their adoption by the design cognoscenti, the architectural community and museums; however, the majority of them never reached a broad audience. It was only the metalwork designed during this period that achieved both commercial and critical success, catapulting certain architects to the forefront of the public's understanding of object design.

ALDO ROSSI
Piazza, from the service "Tea and Coffee Piazza," designed 1979–1983, made 1985
sterling silver, glass, brass, enamel, fabric, quartz
THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS, HOUSTON DESIGN COUNCIL

In 1979, the Italian design firm Alessi initiated a project that would become the model for metalwork initiatives throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Alessi invited 11 architects to design tea and coffee services that would be made from luxurious metals and in limited editions.[3] The goal of the project was to offer architects an opportunity to put forth experimental ideas that addressed the then-current debate surrounding neo- and postmodernism.

Aldo Rossi's submission to the project was a set of coffee and tea forms assembled in a pedimented case. The building (case) was reminiscent of his 1979 design for the Teatro del Mondo, a floating theatre in Venice. The shape of the coffee pot references the top of the Campanile in St. Mark's Square, while the clock and pediment top of the case are taken from Rossi's 1979 Scuola di Brioni building. Of all the Alessi tea and coffee sets designed for the project, Rossi's is the most architectural and prominent in terms of its graphic image. Perhaps that is why it has achieved iconic status for the period.

The success of Alessi's project spurred a number of firms throughout Italy and America to initiate similar collaborations. In the 1980s in Italy, Cleto Munari and de Vecchi, two traditional silversmithing companies, invited architects to design useful wares for the home as well as jewelry. In producing such designs, these firms revived traditional craftsmanship and techniques, utilizing multi-generational workshops and studios to create each object.

Alessi's project and the attention that it brought to architect-designed objects encouraged Nan Swid and Addie Powell to establish SwidPowell Design in 1982. The team's mission was to bring good contemporary design to the United States tabletop industry. Swid commented, "What I wanted was a portrait of my generation. I also knew that very few people would ever live in houses designed by Richard Meier or Robert Venturi, but I thought they would like to experience that aesthetic level."[4] By commissioning prominent American architects to create designs for the table, SwidPowell broadened the public's understanding of postmodernist design as well as the role of architects within the broader design fields.[5] The objects were also accessible to consumers in a way that other architects' designs were not, as they were available for purchase in purposely selected department stores and boutiques throughout the United States.

Richard Meier, one of the first architects to work with SwidPowell, designed an extensive line of metalwork, glass, and china for the firm. Meier's designs embody the tenets of postmodernism as well as reference the design vocabulary of early 20th-century designer-architects like Josef Hoffmann, Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Frank Lloyd Wright. Initially made by craftsmen in Italy, SwidPowell metalwork was later produced in Argentina.

Arguably the most significant contributions to postmodernist architect-design came through Memphis, the radical Italian design group that took the design

Recent decades have seen a renewed interest on the part of manufacturers to work with celebrated architects to create functional objects.

world by storm in 1981 at Milan's *Salone de Mobile.* Founded by Milanese architects and designers, notably Ettore Sottsass, Matteo Thun and Michele de Lucchi, the group aimed to "reinvent an approach to design, to plan other spaces, to foresee other environments, to imagine other lives." The designers placed great emphasis on color, ornamental surfaces and irregular shapes for their everyday objects. Although, ultimately, the line was commercially unsuccessful, the effect of Memphis on the design world was indelible and lasting.

Ettore Sottsass designed *Murmansk* fruit stand in 1981 for the first Memphis exhibition. A monumental object that is both architectonic and luxurious, the *Murmansk* was hailed as a transformation of function by form. Made in small numbers, both in sterling silver and the less expensive silverplate, it is one of the most iconic Memphis designs in metal and can be found in museum collections across the globe.

Architects continue to play a significant role in the design of metalwork and jewelry, whether it is through individual commissions by mainstream manufacturers, collaborations with firms such as Alessi, or collectives such as *Chi Ha Paura…?* While this article has focused on the handmade, there have also been metalwork objects of significance created in the recent past using industrial metals and production techniques. Indeed, rapidly evolving technologies hold the key to the future as architects harness the latest modeling and production machinery to create metalwork designs that will, no doubt, advance the dialogue in the field. As these objects offer a wealth of information in regard to aesthetic styles, international design movements, metalworking techniques, function and material culture, their place within the history of design is both essential and gratifying.

Cindi Strauss is curator of Modern and Contemporary Decorative Arts and Design at The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

All works Collection of The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

All photographs © The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

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1. William Morris. *Architecture Industry and Wealth: Collected Papers.* London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1902, 45.
2. According to the archives of the Wiener Werkstätte, this Flower Basket is either one of six made on October 20, 1909, or one of six made in 1910.
3. The other architects included Michael Graves, Robert Venturi, Stanley Tigerman, Charles Jencks, Richard Meier, Oscar Tusquets, Kuzumasa Yamshita, Hans Hollein, Paolo Portoghesi, and Alessandro Mendini.
4. Annette Tapert. *Swid Powell: Objects by Architects.* New York: Rizzoli, 1990, 17.
5. SwidPowell originally invited nine architects to discuss the project: Philip Johnson, Richard Meier, Stanley Tigerman, Charles Gwathmey, Robert Siegel, Robert A.M. Stern, James Stewart Polshek, Charles Pfister and Joe D'Urso. The initial collection was designed by Gwathmey Siegel, Meier, Stern, Laurinda Spear, Arata Isozaki, Tigerman and Venturi.

RICHARD MEIER
Candelabra, designed 1983
silverplate
© RICHARD MEIER & PARTNERS ARCHITECTS

ETTORE SOTTSASS
Murmansk Fruit Stand, designed 1981
sterling silver
© ETTORE SOTTSASS

Reviews

"Volker Atrops/ Brigitte Schorn: Vintage Violence"

Jewelerswerk
Washington, DC
April 12–May 2, 2014

by Katja Toporski

"Vintage Violence" consists of a collection of aluminum jewelry pieces with an unusual provenance. As artists in residence at the Jacob Bengel Stiftung in Idar-Oberstein, Germany, Volker Atrops and Brigitte Schorn explored the abandoned custom jewelry factory on the premises. The place still contained the old pattern rolls, stamps and forging dies that were used in the jewelry production in the 1950s, as well as buckets full of aluminum chains. Rather than apply a retro style, the couple used the old machines to create pieces of their own aesthetic. They stamped vintage decorative motifs onto strips of aluminum that curled up under pressure to form bowlike brooches or unruly looking ring tops; and they embossed thick metal disks with repeating floral patterns that resulted in chunky charms bearing signs of the metal distortion inherent in the manufacturing method. While the pieces display patterns of the past, their forms were dictated principally by the artists' processes, which linked them conceptually to the tools rather than historical design. The works were anodized, each in its own restrained color palette, creating a hoard of an otherworldly beauty.

Both Schorn and Atrops are trained goldsmiths. Atrops studied under Otto Kunzli in Munich, while Schorn went on to pursue a degree in textile design. Most of the works in the show were designed in true collaboration, but some bear the hallmarks of one or the other individual. For example, the rings made of stamped aluminum wire contorted into a cocktail ring topper relate to Atrops's serpent/knot rings from the early 1990s. A number of necklaces have additions of textile elements suggesting Schorn's involvement: knitted collars are hung with metal charms, their pastel colors matching that of the anodized aluminum. One sees in these a connection to the bow brooches, but in other instances the introduction of yarn appears somewhat haphazard. In one neckpiece strands of aluminum chain are woven together in several segments with yarn left visibly knotted together at the ends. The perfectly finished metal chains benefit from the added rigidity of the woven segments but perhaps would have been more effective had their yarn ends been joined in a more considered manner.

Neckpiece
aluminum, yarn

Other questions raised by this body of work relate to issues of value. Aluminum was considered as valuable as gold in Napoleonic times, due mainly to its difficult extraction and production methods. While this is no longer an issue, the works by Atrops and Schorn are clearly made to a goldsmith's standards of craftsmanship and design. Although their works employ inexpensive metal formed by tools of mass production, the artists have stamped edition numbers onto each piece, indicating a wish to imbue them with high value. Yet in terms of genre, the pieces in "Vintage Violence" seem to hover between bulk ware and the unique, between fashion and art jewelry—and in this classification void may have created their own striking new category.

In their original presentation during "Schmuck 2013," the works were shown at Zipprich's antique bookshop

Installation view of "Volker Atrops/Brigitte Schorn: Vintage Violence"

in Munich; rings, bracelets and necklaces were displayed on and around the books throughout the store, creating an integrated appearance of vintage merchandise in a retail setting. At the same time, online images showed the pieces draped over old inventory documents, which may or may not have originated from the Bengel factory. Such a display provided a context for the jewelry and gave the individual pieces distinct status among other objects from the past. At JewelersWerk, all pieces were displayed together on a blank canvas in the center of the gallery space, an arrangement that created a strong visual impression of the collection as a whole but obscured the importance of individual pieces. This minimal display also removed an entry point to the understanding of the work's factory genesis. While a dazzling array of iridescent colors certainly speaks to the beauty of the "Vintage Violence" collection, it is the awareness of its history that sets it in a place beyond mere splendor.

Katja Toporski is a Washington, DC–based jeweler and writer, and teaches at Towson University.

Caroline Gore: "…mercurial silence…"

Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts
Grand Rapids, MI
February 28–April 27, 2014

by Kim Cridler

Most of my furniture is from IKEA, impermanent and unburdened. An exception is the piano; brought to our house through a fog of grief, later unsuccessfully posted on Craigslist. Now our daughter is learning to play it, her afternoons colored by the instrument's caramel wood, the sound of scales and nagging.

What do we owe to the dead? How do we make use of what is inherited? Caroline Gores' recent exhibition, "…mercurial silence…" is framed as a navigation of loss through making, but reads as a stage for personal ritual. Minimalism and luxury mix through this collection of objects and images. Prominent cherry wood elements including a table and chest are simply styled, yet finely crafted. Paired with 19th-century photography techniques, burnished brass, lengths of

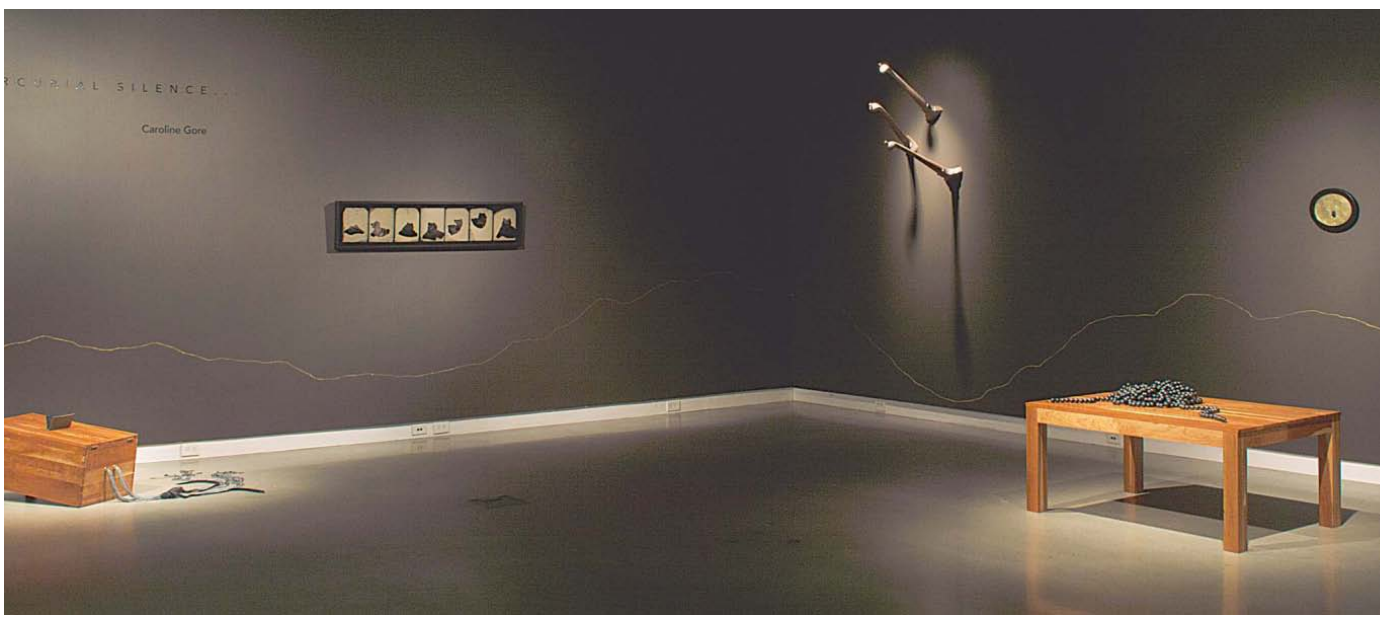
Collide, *performed*, 2014
tintype, brass
10 x 12"

black leather, hematite and jet (a gemlike material associated with mourning jewelry), the work suggests a restrained take on Victorian excess.

Collide is a low wood table with chunky legs and a plank top bearing a mass of large jet beads with random facets. This writhing pile is carefully knotted like a string of pearls, interspersed with faceted black spinel, and finished with prickly silver findings. Nearby images (in collaboration with Mary Whalen) show the beads used as meditation or obscuration. Sheets of brass expose cropped tintypes of a woman wrapping the beads over her head, coiling the beads around her neck and wrists, worrying them through her fingers.

Revenir, for Niobe alludes to use or ceremony but is opaque in meaning. The title refers to the Greek figure whose arrogant declarations lead to the death of her family and her own eternal suffering. In the piece, an austere wooden box is propped up at one end by narrow wheels. The other end rests on the floor where long tassels of hematite beads flow out. The hinged top opens from the center with upright leather pulls. The gallery guide provides the contents of the box: seven identical silk dresses. These dresses present themselves in black glass ambrotypes in *Revenir (seven dresses performed).* The material process of this collaborative piece stands out; the plates feel more physical than

Installation view of "...mercurial silence..." at Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts, Grand Rapids



pictorial with syrupy surfaces, unevenly exposed edges, animated shadows and smears that remind us of the chemical miracle of photography. They picture a simple black dress in squirming animation. Unshaped by the figure or even a hanger, the luminous forms seem possessed by unnatural force, with twists where the guts should be, and dark voids where one might expect legs.

Between these works is *chorus*, two groups of furniture legs hung horizontally from the wall. In one corner three table legs stretch out, led by club feet. Eleven chair legs across the room are equidistant, but unordered, like the unseeing tentacles of a sea creature. Each piece is formally fitted with a brass plate where it meets the wall, and corklike brass stoppers pop out from the foot. At first glance, this work seems designed to emphasize the description in the gallery guide; that all wood pieces are "reclaimed wood (cherry) from inherited furniture." Upon reflection it posses a welcome poignancy and speaks simply about the mixed blessing of autonomy. These supports, severed from traditions that bind and sustain, float freely, seeking a reason to belong. Poet/undertaker Thomas Lynch reminds us that "the dead don't care" and so the rippling blow of death is the business of the living. Free to express grieving and loss as we wish, we choose how to interpret traditions that connect us to each other and our past. Heirlooms may be patched into our daily life, or sold, or remade, as Gore seems to suggest, because use renews an object and its meaning. However these works also remind us that the desire to be understood and of use to others comes with its own obligations. In this space, we are alone with our suffering.

Kim Cridler is an artist and educator based in West Michigan.

"Gene Pijanowski: 30 Years of Jewelry and Objects"

Velvet da Vinci
San Francisco, CA
February 5–March 9, 2014

by Anton Stuebner

Widely acclaimed for his use of Western and Japanese metalwork and craft techniques, Gene Pijanowski's jewelry and objects have appeared in more than 100 exhibitions and group shows since 1965. Yet it was difficult not to be awed by the breadth of his work in this retrospective at Velvet da Vinci, the most comprehensive survey of the artist's output in more than 20 years. Focusing on his mid- to-late career work from the late 1970s on, the exhibition charts the evolution of Pijanowski's craft, which reflects his response to traditional Japanese crafts and metal arts. Studying in Tokyo alongside former wife and partner Hiroko Sato, Pijanowski developed his own form of mokume-gane, a labor intensive process of producing a faux wood-grain finish through careful layering and forging of mixed-metal alloys, followed by painstaking application of a surface patina.

Pijanowski is largely credited with introducing these techniques to American metalsmiths, and many of the most significant works in the show, like *Untitled Hollowware* (1977), utilize this finish to almost painterly effect. The streaked black marbling in this piece, for instance, gives the copper dome vessel the appearance of worn lacquer with veneer fallen away after generations of wear.

In another example, the oxidized silver and copper surfaces of *Skinner's Blade* (1988), conversely, appear to have a rusted-over dullness suggesting an extended history of use. At first glance, these pieces could almost be mistaken for ancient artifacts, and that ostensibly is Pijanowski's genius. In fabricating an appearance of antiquity, he places his work in the continuum of traditional Japanese metalwork, but with a singular use of metals and finishing that are entirely his own.

Pijanowski's metalwork is staggeringly complex and invites repeat examination. The jewelry and objects on display, however, become even more interesting when seen alongside the artist's later study and work with other Japanese craft techniques. The strangest and arguably most beguiling pieces in the exhibition are

Oh! I Am Precious #15 (brooch), *1987*
glued paper cord (*mizuhiki*), canvas
7 ½ x 2 ¾ x ½"

Untitled Hollowware, 1977
mokume-gane copper/shakudo
2 ½ x 2 ¾ x 3 ¾"

the brooches and earrings made from *mizuhiki* cord, a craft material, composed of twisted "washi" rice paper, indigenous to the Iida region of Japan. Often combined with clay or seaweed, the twisted paper hardens until it forms a stiff but pliable cord that can be easily woven, coiled or knotted. It is time-intensive to produce, but the result is a material that can be configured into different shapes and textures while still maintaining the integrity of its original form.

The malleability of this material becomes especially evident in pieces like *Oh! I am Precious #15* (1987), a brooch design that features a tightly coiled disk of gold-toned *mizuhiki* set against a dense backdrop of straight reed-like bands glued to a canvas back. From a distance, the gold-toned cords could be mistaken for textured metal, and the tromp l'oeil effect produced here makes these pieces appear almost uncomfortably heavy. However, their delicacy becomes apparent once they are in hand, and the seeming dissonance between their visual density and physical lightness only adds to the fascination these pieces inspire upon encounter.

The range of jewelry and objects on display reveal the depth of Pijanowski's technical skill and innovation. In recognizing their aesthetic beauty, it is easy to forget that these pieces are, at least in form, intended to function as vessels or objects of adornment. In an exhibition setting, they can be appreciated for their sculptural qualities, intricate textures or multi-dimensionality. At the same time, these pieces suggest lifetimes of use and wear that purposely are never recounted for the viewer. But this elision seems necessary and even fitting. After years of being regarded mainly as a highly skilled craftsman, Pijanowski must now be more fully recognized for what he is: an artist.

Anton Stuebner is a San Francisco-based arts writer and recent graduate of the Master of Arts program in Visual & Critical Studies at California College of the Arts.

Sondra Sherman: Found Subjects

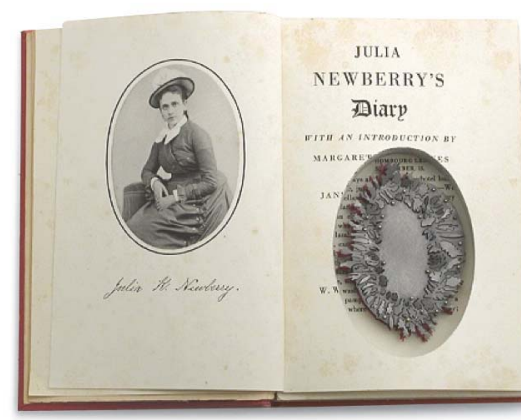
Hunterdon Art Museum
Clinton, NJ
January 12, 2014–March 9, 2014

by Marjorie Simon

They say print is dead, but books live on. And so they do in "Found Subjects," Sondra Sherman's engrossing book-themed opus, in which the volumes are repurposed as presentation boxes for jewelry. The ensemble installation consists of about a dozen books, each displayed (or more precisely, splayed) open on a whitewashed wooden lectern reminiscent of a stand for a dictionary or family bible. A recess cut into the pages of each book contains and conceals the made-to-order jewelry. Like the botanical jewelry in Sherman's previous collection "Anthophobia (Fear of Flowers)," these pieces are exquisitely constructed of blackened steel and silver, and sprinkled with a few stones. Cleverly, the stands become containers for the works, at rest or in transit.

The idea for this project came from Sherman's decision years ago to arrange her books by color, an attempt to quiet the visual cacophony of her home environment. By stating at the outset that she has not read the books, Sherman de-contextualizes them: the text doesn't even matter. They become simply objects made of paper, cardboard and fabric, which can be handled, manipulated and ultimately, discarded. Frankly, the thought of destroying books for any reason makes me a little queasy, and color seems an unlikely principle for organizing one's library. Then again, books are multiples, and these have already been discarded (as they were purchased second hand). Furthermore, books have long been used for keeping secrets, and Sherman creates her own "fictions" for each volume, relating jewelry designs to clues waiting to be discovered in the books' unseen covers and titles.

Julia Newberry's Diary, 2010
steel, sterling silver, nail polish
book: 8 x 5 ½ x 1"; brooch: 3 ¾ x 2 ¾ x ½"
COURTESY SIENNA GALLERY



For example, the bright rose cover of *Julia Newberry's Diary* is opened to a photograph of the author, whose direct gaze meets our eyes. The brooch tucked into the opposing pages resembles something Miss Newberry might wear; its pierced edge echoes the repeating pleats that fan out on her dress. But who was Julia Newberry and how did her diary come to be published at all? It's a mystery, unless you care to look up the title online, as I did.

There is no discernible organization to the arrangement of lecterns and objects. Two bookstands are angled together as if having a private conversation, but the books do not relate thematically. On one rests the vintage *American Women's Home Companion*, while the other supports *Sumpf und Wasserplanzen*, one of a late 20th-century German nature series. A delicate floral brooch, realistically rendered in silver, rests on a watercolor illustration of marsh plants, looking as if a dragonfly had landed on a stalk of bog lily. A synthetic fire opal flashes like sunlight against the dark metal.

With "Found Subjects," Sherman has added an emotional dimension to her characteristically cerebral endeavors. However, her intellectual rigor keeps the work well away from facile sentiment. Engaging on more than one level with the objects she's found and the ones she's made ensures that we're not stuck in the past. Yet the work does stimulate our sense memories of clothbound books we've actually read and loved. Such associations would, of course, be impossible with E-readers.

Marjorie Simon is a jeweler and writer residing in Philadelphia.

Installation view of "Found Subjects" at the Hunterdon Art Museum

Robert Ebendorf

BY TONI GREENBAUM

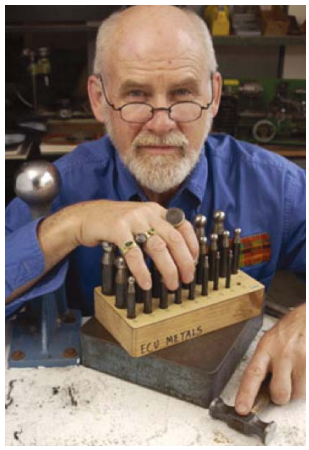


PHOTO COURTESY OF EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY.

I HAVE HAD the pleasure of knowing Bob Ebendorf for more than 30 years. Having closely followed his varied and illustrious career, I've come to regard him—teacher, artist, advocate— as the very embodiment of both American metalsmithing and jewelry education. From the start, Bob's dual commitments, to his art and to his students, have occupied him in equal measure, and by "students," I refer to those officially matriculated as well as folks like myself who have consistently benefited from his seasoned opinions, wise insights and habitual correspondence. In an age of instant email communication and impersonal social networking, one can imagine how refreshing it is to still receive posted envelopes stuffed with images of Bob's latest aesthetic endeavors, not to mention exhibition catalogues from East Carolina University's jewelry program, where he holds the position of Belk Distinguished Professor of Art. Bob's postcards, invitations to pertinent shows and magazine clippings are all invariably illuminated with personal notes in his inimitable handwriting.

More than an innovator and visionary, Bob Ebendorf has been a catalyst for the entire jewelry community, both in the United States and abroad. His charisma, encouragement of new ideas, as well as consummate skill as a studio practitioner, were surely among the propelling factors that lead to SNAG's very founding in 1969. Bob has grown consistently as an artist, each decade, right up to the present; and his prodigious output continues to impress with assemblages that remain idiosyncratic, complex, powerful and impeccably crafted.

During May of this year, several momentous jewelry events took place in New York City and I had the good fortune to run into Bob again and again. Bob's "date" at these celebrations was his lovely twenty something daughter, Brittany—beaming with pride, as she witnessed the love and respect accorded her father by fellow jewelers and arts professionals alike. He may have been her dad, but she was awestruck by him, just the same.

Lady with the Gold Fish, 2006
crab claw, found parts, pearl, sterling silver
PHOTO: STEVEN BRIAN SAMUELS; COURTESY GALLERY LOUPE

Colored Smoke Machine (brooch), early-mid 1970s
bronze gold plated, acrylic, pearl
PHOTO: EVON STREETMAN; COURTESY GALLERY LOUPE

One of these events that drew the international jewelry community to New York was the inauguration of an important gift to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the exhibition "Unique by Design: Contemporary Jewelry in the Donna Schneier Collection." Chatting with Bob about his representation, along with over 80 other metalsmiths, in this seminal collection, I was reminded of just how successful his perpetual efforts to galvanize artists, historians, curators, writers, educators and collectors have been. He has also been remarkably effective in introducing studio jewelry to the general public. In fact, Bob's broad-based knowledge, support for documentation, genuine love of people, contagious optimism and winning personality have helped nudge this art form to the encouraging position it occupies today.

There are few American metalsmiths more deserving of the SNAG Lifetime Achievement Award than Robert Ebendorf. For half a century, he has displayed unwavering passion for and total commitment to his chosen discipline. But Bob is not only a master of his generation, he is also a true gentleman.

Toni Greenbaum is a Brooklyn-based art historian specializing in 20th- and 21st-century jewelry and metalwork.

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Work by recipients of SNAG's Educational Endowment Scholarships
l to r: Heather Nuber, Aric Verrastro, and Vince Pontillo-Verrastro

2014 SNAG Educational Endowment Scholarship Recipients

SNAG is happy to announce the recipients this year's Educational Endowment Scholarships: $2,000 Award to Vincent Pontillo-Verrastro, graduate student, Indiana University, Bloomington; $1,500 Award to Heather Nuber, undergraduate student, Edinboro University, Pennsylvania; and $1,000 Award to Aric Verrastro, graduate student, Indiana University, Bloomington.

SNAG Welcomes New Board Members

At the April 2014 Conference in Minneapolis, SNAG welcomed the following new board members: as President-Elect, Nicole Jacquard, educator at School of Fine Arts, University of Indiana, Bloomington; Sydney Brown, artist and curator; Dianne deBiexedon, educator, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA; Tedd McDonah, studio artist and educator; and Lauren Selden, educator at Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, Texas. The Nominations and Elections Committee welcomed newly elected member, Dan DiCaprio, educator at University of Louisiana, Lafayette.

SNAG's new President-Elect, Nicole Jacquard

Thanks to 2014 Conference Co-Chairs

SNAG's 43rd conference, "From Grain to Gold," was held in Minneapolis, April 23 – 26, 2014, and was dedicated to Lifetime Achievement Award recipient, Robert Ebendorf. We are grateful to Rio Grande for being our overall sponsor for the conference.

Thanks to the hard work of co-chairs Britta Kauppila, Emily Johnson, and Dominique Bereiter, the conference had a great line up of speakers, exhibitions, activities, and events. Thank you also to all of our volunteers, staff, and board. Plan on joining us at next year's conference in Boston, May 20-23!

2014 Co-Chairs, l to r: Emily Johnson, Britta Kauppila, and Dominique Bereiter

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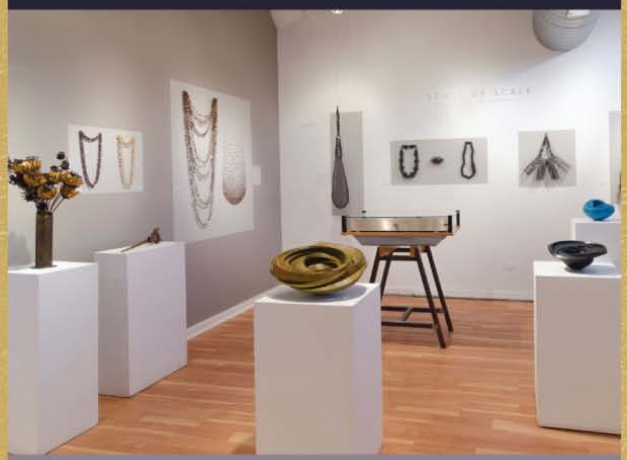

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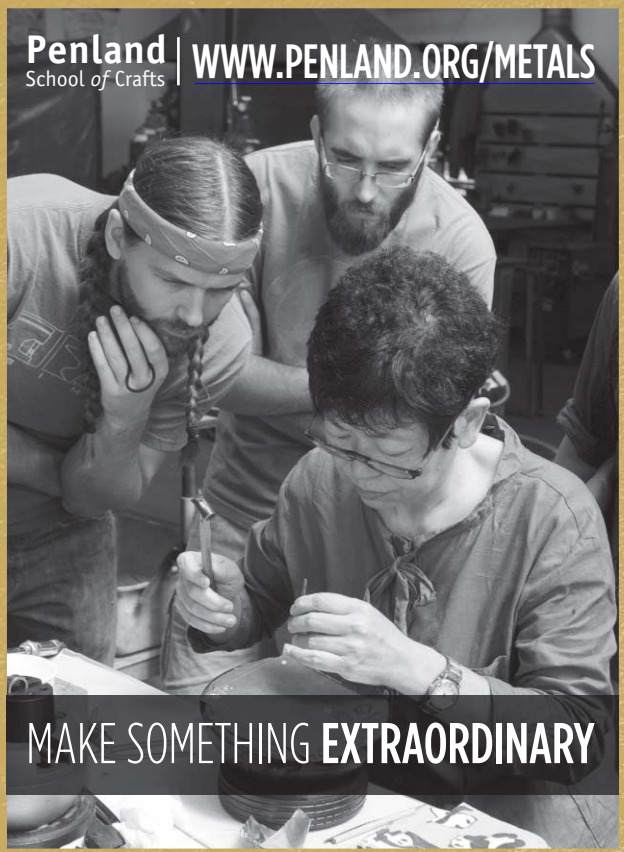

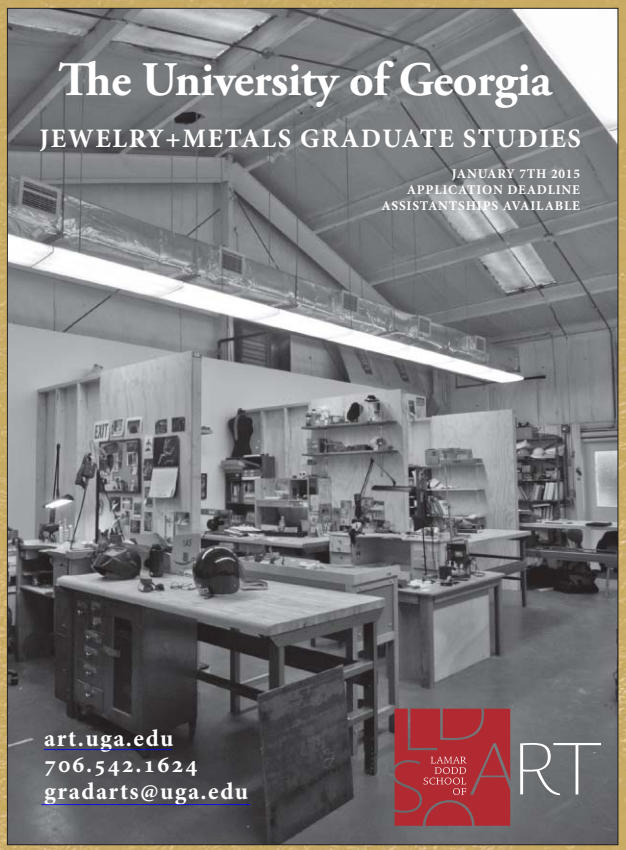

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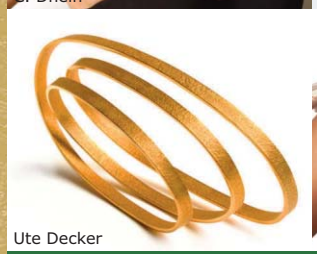
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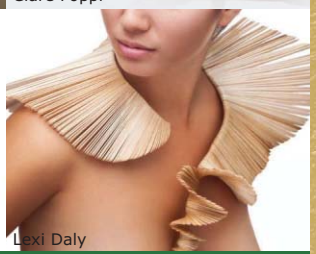
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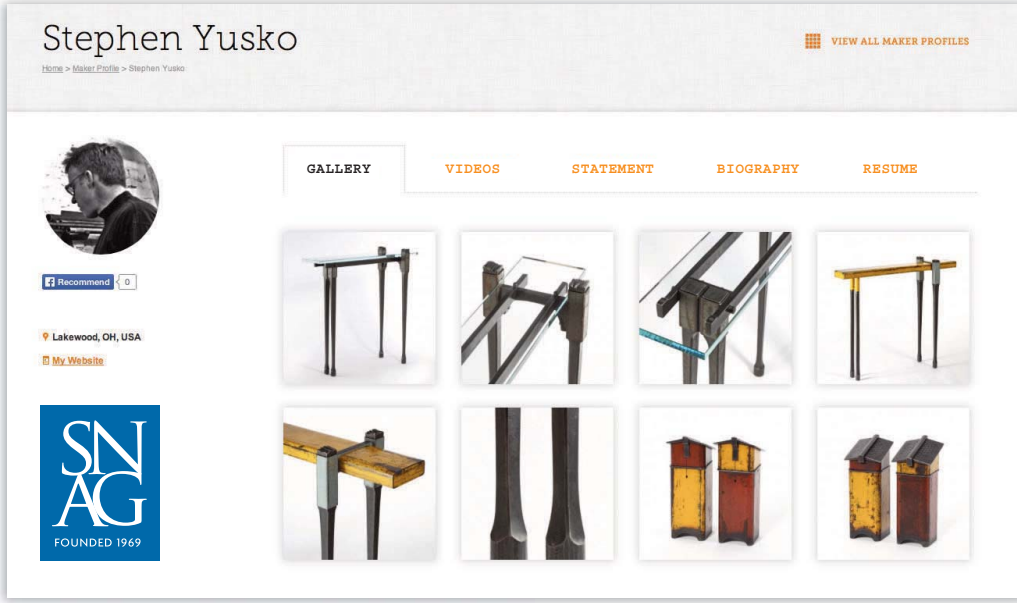

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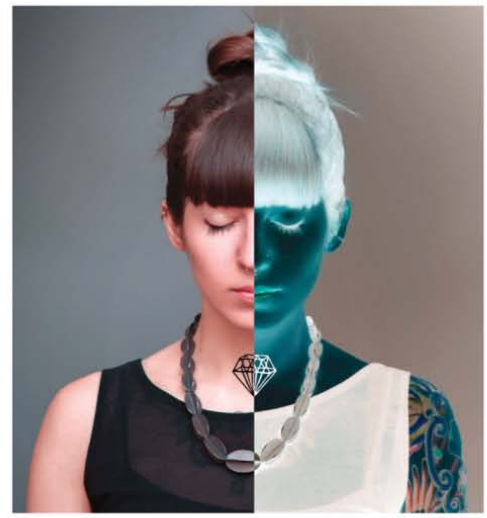

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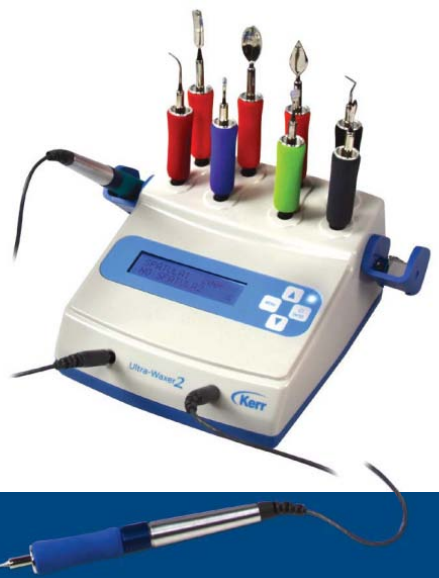

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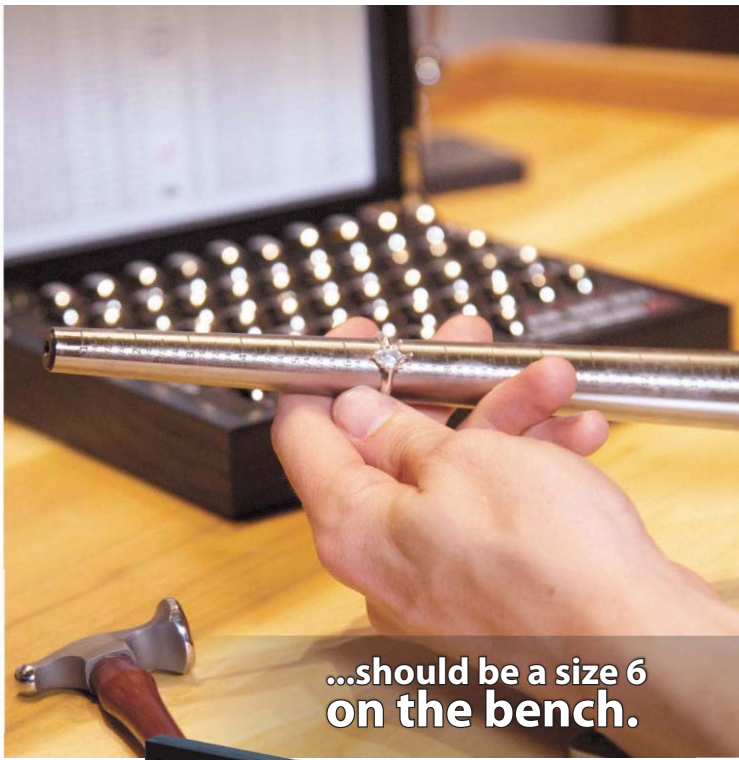

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